

GRAVE *Three*
DIALOGUES *3*

BETWIXT

Three Free-Thinkers,

VIZ.

K Q, A and X.



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DIALOGUES

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DIALOGUE I.

O.



IS great Pity to see the Extravagancies into which Enthusiasm leads some of our Species, and the Affronts daily done to the Dignity of our Nature by that Means.

A. Enthusiasm is a Compliment that differing Sects are always ready to pay to their Opposites, upon their appearing Heroick in the Opposition, while none can be found ready to accept of it. But, what is the Folly, or even Wickedness, that Men have not been guilty of, under the Pretext of Conscience? Every one is very ready to assume this to himself, but not so willing to allow it to another that differs from him; which makes me fear it is but a Pretence on all Hands.

X. But this should perswade you, That all are agreed there is such a Thing as Conscience, and that it is a good Thing, which, even they who ridicule the Pretence to it in others, would be thought themselves to have.

There is a Dread of the Deity, and of eternal Judgment, which, however Men may endeavour to divert, they cannot wholly extirpate out of their Minds. This is supposed

in all the Tricks of Politicians about Religion. And it is not the easiest Thing in the World to persuade the worst of Men to practise what they firmly believe will expose them to the divine Judgment, without any Hope of Impunity. But, when we are so far imposed upon, as to imagine Actions that are most foolish, or even wicked, to be agreeable to the Deity, then we can be conscientiously foolish or wicked.

Q. I shall not insist on the Name *Enthusiasm*, though I would think it well bestowed on any who should imagine that Mankind can be without some Religion or other. The most stupid of the Race cannot look on this World, which they see with their Eyes, without the Idea of a great Contrivance, which necessarily implies a Contriver. And one needs no more but hear two of the basest of the Croud scolding together, to convince him, that the very Dregs of Mankind are not destitute of all Sense of the *Turpe & honestum*.

A. Yes. And what is *Turpe* in one Country is *Honestum* in another, or even in the same Country at different Times.

Q. So it may be, as to some Things, such as positive Institutions, but not so with respect to all. And some Things may be held lawful and allowable, and encouraged on some Accounts, notwithstanding their Turpitude; but they cannot appear comely and honest in the same View wherein their Turpitude is seen. But, however Mankind may differ as to Particulars, it is enough to the Point, that they all agree in the general Sense of Right and Wrong, and that some Characters must be approved, and some condemned every where. That Mens Consciences are miserably misguided in innumerable Instances, I freely own; But still it is too manifest to be denied, that there is Conscience in Man.

A. You are so very abstract, and distinguish so nicely in Defence of this great Director and Guide, that I would be content to hear you a little further, on the Subject of its being liable to be so much misguided.

Q. That needs no more Abstractness or Niceness of Distinction, but this, That Men either mistake their own partial Reasonings for the faithful Verdict of their Consciences, or subject their Consciences to other Guides that mislead them. But, as you like not my Abstractness, I would rather speak of a particular Instance that I had in my Eye when I was complaining of Enthusiasm.

A. An

A. An Instance of a misguided Conscience! Pray let us hear it.

Q. You know the little Sect that has appeared of late, which I would not think worth the noticing, but for the Pity that's due to any of the human Kind, when they run into such Ways of Superstition, as reflect on human Nature, and create Disturbance to themselves and all about them. This whimsical People stick at nothing, be it never so ridiculous or uneasy to themselves and others, in their Way of Religion; wherein they yet appear very conscientious.

A. They have been too much gratified by the Notice that has been taken of them; for that's the very Thing they want, as *Erostratus* when he burned *Diana's* Temple. And the more Contempt and Opposition they meet with, they have the more Honour among themselves: For, whether there be any such Thing as Conscience among Men or not, 'tis always a great Honour to be thought to act according to it; at least, by one's own Club, if no more can be attained. But, seeing they do not aim at raising any Comotions in the State, and have no Power, though they had a Mind, to alter the Constitution and Establishment of the Church, I cannot but look on it as a great Weakness in any to be disturbed or uneasy with a People who are, in all Respects, so inconsiderable: For, though the Resentment of a proud injured Clergy-man, be, without Doubt, at Work in this Case, yet it does not work here in the Ways wherein it has given the greatest Disturbances to the World; but in a Way wherein it may be easily subdued by Neglect.

Q. What you say, has been, and may be again; But, as you cannot well deny that there is something odd in this Matter, and out of the common Ways wherein the Resentment of ambitious Clergy-men works, I still insist, That a misguided Conscience must be in the Case: For, if the Honour of being thought conscientious were the Spring of all their peculiar Motions, they would not take every Step that procures the Disesteem and Hatred of the greatest Pretenders to Conscience among whom they live; They would shun all Appearance of Agreement with any who are reckoned Malignants against the godly Party, or loose in their Principles; They would be less severe upon one another's Faults than they seem to be; and, in short, their Conduct

duct would be more regulated by Esteem than I can perceive it is.

X. I even suspect they give yourself some Disquiet. But, may you not account for this *Phenomenon*, by a frightful *Idea* they may have got of the State of Mankind, with Reference to the Judgment of GOD, and of the Course of the Multitude, as displeasing to him, and inconsistent with the common Pretence of Love to him, and Regard to his Law, so that they cannot think themselves safe in the Way of the Multitude? Yea, and they may be perswaded, that the further they go from them, and the more they are condemn'd by them, they are the more approv'd of God.

Q. It is possible; but if they be in the Panick with the Course of the Multitude, so as to think they cannot fly too far from it, I should then expect to see them acting the Reverse of the common Actions of Life.

X. It must be the Rule by which they discover the Corruption of the Multitude, that directs their Consciences in differing from them; and so they can go no further in Opposition to the common Course, or in receiving Opposition from it, than that Rule directs them, if they be acting conscientiously.

A. I never saw Men pretend Conscience and Zeal for God uniformly; they always take Care of some darling Appetites to have them gratify'd, when their Censures are most severe on others, and even when they are in some Things most severe on themselves.

X. Let it be true, that we are more readily severe on others than on ourselves; yea, and that we may be induc'd to Severity on ourselves in some Things, to quiet our Minds in the remaining Possession and Enjoyment of our darling Lusts; yet this discovers some Action of Conscience, tho' misguided, and shews that the worst of us are not wholly free of it. After all your Insinuations against it, I perswade myself it can give you some Uneasiness upon Occasions. And if you shall trace your Arguings against it to their proper Source, I doubt not but you'll find them to be the Fruits of an Effort in your Mind to shake off that same Dread of a Deity, and of eternal Judgment, which yet forces itself in upon you at Times, in spite of all your Arguments.

Q. How miserable and how inhumane must that Mind be, that cannot be easy without a Perswasion, That there is no Conscience,

Conscience, no Truth nor Goodness to be found in Man! But I was wanting to be inform'd of the Rule that directs the Consciences of that People, and how they are led into all the ridiculous Practices and Ways of Thinking, that render them unfit for the Society of Mankind.

A. Whether Man be naturally sociable or not, I shall never believe that to be Conscience that disturbs Society.

X. Wicked Society, if you mean, you are at a Contradiction. But you forget what I have been saying, That it is the Conviction they may have of the Judgment of God against the Courses of the Society which they withstand, that makes them differ, and so they act conscientiously in the Difference.

Q. I look on myself as a middle Person 'twixt you Two, who cannot be soon brought together; and I must, in the mean Time, have a satisfying Answer to my Question.

X. Suppose then, they had only Nature's Light for their Rule, and it were possible for them to attempt to walk up to it in all Things, would not this be an Attempt to differ from the Bulk of Mankind, yea, and even from these Men who shew no small Zeal for what they call the Light of Nature, as it were in Opposition to the Christian Revelation?

Tell me, do you not think that an Endeavour after the strictest Conformity to the Law of Nature, would make Mankind uneasy? For, not to speak of Envy, tho' Men neglect their Duty, and do wrong, they love not to have it told them that they are doing so; and a practical Difference from us in being more conscientious than we, makes us uneasy; because it is the most effectual Way of declaring us guilty before God in that wherein we imagin'd he would excuse us; much more will we be uneasy, when we see any, in the Fear of God's Displeasure, flying from that wherein we imagin'd he approv'd us; so that we are oblig'd, for our own Ease, to persuade ourselves, that, however Conscience be pretended in Opposition to us, there is indeed no Conscience in the Case. And tho' the natural Dread of a Deity makes some Form of Religion necessary, and there must be some Restraint of vicious Appetites in human Society; yet the Bulk of Mankind never did, nor will, while this World stands, tamely suffer such Thoughts
of

of God and his Judgment, to prevail and take Place among them in Practice, as leave no Room for the Fulfilment of their beloved Lusts.

⊙. All this Discourse goes on the Supposition, That the Law of Nature is against Nature, and a Burden laid on the human Constitution which it is not able to bear; and that the Deity is a malignant Being, that delights in the Uneasiness of his Creatures, and cannot bear with their Frailties: Whereas, when we attempt to think of the Deity, we lose ourselves in the Thoughts of infinite Goodness, where with it is impossible to reconcile such frightful Notions of him and his Laws as I perceive you are insinuating.

X. I suppose no other Notion of the Deity but that of infinite Goodness, and let his Law be the Rule of our Conformity to his Goodness; but then, the least Disconformity to that Law must have a Malignity in it, to which the Deity is as opposite as he is good. And seeing there is an infinite Opposition betwixt the Deity and the least Deviation from his Law, I can far less imagine a Possibility of a Reconciliation betwixt him and the least Sin, than I can think of a Reconciliation of the purest Light with Darkness. And so I may also say, That the least true Endeavour after Conformity to the Law of God, must be so far an Attack upon all Sin, and make a Difference in the World, unless you will set all the World upon the same Endeavour, even a Difference as between Light and Darkness.

⊙. Metaphysics in Perfection! and against plain Fact. Does not God pour out the Riches of his Goodness on Sinners every Day? — If, as you are insinuating, he cannot but appear infinitely opposite to Sin, how should then his Goodness lead Sinners to Repentance which, at this Rate, would make him irreconcilable to Sinners?

X. Let it pass for Metaphysics, till you be willing to understand it, and able to answer it; but, as there is no Reasoning against Fact, it is likewise most plain Fact, that all the common Instances of the Divine Goodness toward Man in this Life, are working together to put an End to that same Life which they seem to uphold, and they must certainly issue in a terrible Stroke upon his

Constitution

Constitution, carrying in it a fearful Prefage of future Punishment on his immortal Part, for his Abuse of the Goodness of GOD.

It is no less plain Fact, that we do not walk up, in all Things, and at all Times, to what we ourselves must own to be right Reason, or to the Law of Nature; which must therefore be a Burden that our Constitution, as it stands, cannot bear; or, if it can bear it, what must we be in the Eye of infinite Goodness, who can conform ourselves to the Law that's the Rule of Conformity to that Goodness, and yet will not?

And when I think of the Law of the infinitely good Being, I must, of Necessity, have some Apprehension of the infinite Majesty and Authority of that Being, which must be acknowledged by me in all my Obedience to his Law, so far as it is Obedience; What then must be the Consequence of my entertaining light Thoughts of the least Transgression of his Law, in whom I live, and move, and have my Being?

The infinite Opposition of the divine Goodness to Sin, which certainly is in the World, cannot appear but by punishing Sin infinitely. But I know you will not easily admit the Notion of infinite Mercy to Sinners, and the infinite Opposition of the divine Goodness to all Sin, both displayed at once in the Salvation of Sinners by the Death of Jesus Christ.

⊙. Because it strikes against his Goodness in pardoning the Penitent, and against his Justice in punishing every one for his own Fault.

X. As you must own the Law knows no Repentance, so, I fear, your Way of arguing will set aside a Providence, together with the Christian Scheme: For, where do you see how Repentance mend the Matter with them who are reduced to worldly Misery by their own Fault? And do you not see them daily relieved at the Expence and Loss of others? But, if every one be punished for his own Fault, I see not how any one can escape Punishment.

⊙. It cannot appear, from any Thing we see, that Goodness does not prevail in the whole System of Things; for there are the strongest Presumptions that it does. And whatever you have to object from the dark Side of Things, may be answered abundantly in a future State, where all will be set on his Rights.

X. While you admit not Revelation, borrow nothing from it, I beg of you. And now, that you are come to your Suppositions, I'll enter my Dissent against your supposing any Thing but what is evidently founded in what you see; and so you must shew me, that, as far as you see into the System of Things, Good prevails in it, before you say any more of Goodness, against the Christian Scheme, which displays the divine Goodness in an astonishing Manner, and leads Sinners effectually to Repentance.

A. Allow me to say you are as far from your Point as you were; but, if you incline to spend your Time on what now lies before you, I foresee the middle Person must be engaged in Difficulties that will oblige him to take to one of the Sides.

Q. I can be pressed with no such Difficulties where I stand, as these I must be engaged in by taking myself to either of the Sides.

A. When you have once rid yourself of the Difficulties of that ancient Question, *Si Deus est, unde malum?* you will be in no great Pain with the Difficulties of the Christian Scheme.

Q. But why should these grand Subjects of Dispute divert me from obtaining an Answer to my plain Question? I am sure these Things, whereby the People of whom we were speaking expose themselves, and offend their Neighbours, cannot plead a Foundation in Nature's Light, and every Body sees them to be a Sect of Christians.

X. And if I should tell you that the Bible is the Rule that directs their Consciencies in their Difference from the rest of Christians, would you not make your own Advantage of this against Christianity? For, you seem no less ready to improve the Ways of that Sect against the Rule they pretend to walk by, than the Practice of any other Set of Christians.

Q. I must own, the Manners of Christians, especially their Leaders, say much to me against the Truth of their Profession.

X. Against their Sincerity in their Profession, perhaps you mean; but if you would have the Conduct of the Clergy and their Followers, after the Days of the Apostles, to be a Confutation of the Truth of Christianity, I must own I

far differ from you, that it is to me a very strong Argument for the Truth of the Scriptures.

⊙. That is surprising! Will you demonstrate the Truth of Christianity from the Lives of Christians, and the Conduct of their Leaders, since the Days of the Apostles! Pray let me hear how your Argument proceeds?

X. You have nothing to say of the Lives of Christians, or the Management of their Leaders, but what I find clearly enough foretold in the New Testament, by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, who not only spake of the pernicious Ways of the Teachers that should come after them, but likewise foretold, that the Way of Truth should be evil spoken of by Reason of them, and of the Multitude following them. There is nothing more evident in the New Testament, than that there was to be a Falling away from the primitive Christianity, and that under the Christian Name; and that the Beginnings of this were working in the very Days of the Apostles, which were to come to a Head in due Time. And this Corruption of Christianity is so represented in the Prophecies of the New Testament, and the Conduct of the Clergy is so set forth there, as I never saw it done so much to the Life, by any who intended thereby to reflect on true Christianity. And hereby, I think, the Truth of the New Testament, which is the Rule and Standard of Christianity, is confirmed to me. And still the more, when I consider, that this Book, which was in the Power of them who corrupted the Christian Religion, and in their Keeping for many Ages, who stuck at no Villany, has come forth again to publick View from among them, clearly testifying against all their Wickedness, declaring the righteous Judgment of GOD against their Ways, and calling Men every where to Repentance.

⊙. I cannot deny that this deserves some Consideration; but all Christians do not agree, that the Scripture is the sole Rule of Christianity. And even they who profess this, subject it to other Rules in the Interpretation of it. Yea, the Scripture itself, and even the New Testament, is liable to a Variety of Glosses contradicting one another; so that it would cost the greatest Labour, and most exquisite Skill in the original Language, and in Antiquity, to fix the Sense. And I do not know if it would be possible, either to fix the Sense of the Original as it now stands, or to come

to any Certainty, as to the Purity of it, after all that has been said on this Subject by the most learned Criticks.

X. The Scriptures are so composed, that whatever Doubt may arise about the Purity of the Text, or the Sense of it, as to any Point of the Christian Faith or Practice in one Passage, Satisfaction can arise, as to that same Point, from a Variety of other Passages. The Doubts moved, and Questions agitated as to the Purity of the original Text, may pass for an Evidence of the Wickedness of the Clergy seeking to establish their own Authority and Interest, by undermining the Authority of the Scriptures. But, after all the Pains taken this Way, all the different Copies, and all the Translations, concur to furnish abundant Matter for the Condemnation of the Clergy and their Followers. Any one of the Translations contains the whole of the Christian Faith and Practice, so as it may be clearly enough seen in one Place or other. And the whole Corruption of the Christian Religion that is to be seen in the *Roman Church*, may be abundantly refuted by the very Translation that's authorised by that Church.

And as to the Sense of the New Testament, I am of Opinion, it would be a plain Book to every one who should come to it as a *little Child*, to learn the *Words of eternal Life*, and read it without the Biasses of Self-interest, and the Love of this present evil World, and without the Wisdom of the Scribe and of the Disputer of this World. These are the Things that make the Gospel, in its Doctrine and Precepts, unintelligible, or of doubtful Interpretation to the most Part of Men. The Clergy take Care to flatter the Pride of the Philosophers, as far as is consistent with their own Authority, in their Glosses, and never fail to give such Senses of the Rules of the Gospel as shall be one Way or other consistent with the worldly Interest and Lusts of their Followers; while all the Power of Interpretation that they are Masters of is exerted, to extract their own Authority, and worldly Interest, out of the Scripture, and make every Thing inconsistent with the Scripture that they can perceive to be against their Interest. But, supposing Self-denial, and setting aside worldly Interest, the Differences about the Sense of the *Words of Eternal Life* could not be so great, as are the Differences about what is called *the Light of Nature*. We have had one Difference about it pretty

pretty wide since our Conversation began ; and none of us are Strangers to the Differences about the Principle of *Moral Virtue*. I was surpris'd with one of the Disputants on that Subject, telling me, *That I could not know what Nature's Light teaches without the Help of Revelation.*—

○. I see I must go without an Answer to my Question. I only wanted to know how far Men might be led into the peculiar Practices of that Sect, by following the Scriptures as their Guide ; and you should be Judge, how far their Ways might be improved against that Rule.

X. Seeing I find you are in good Earnest on this Subject, I shall do my best to satisfy you, the first Time we meet.

DIALOGUE II.

○. I Hope you have not forgot your Promise.

X. To shew you that I have not, I thus begin to perform it,

In the first Place, That People pretend to believe the Scriptures upon the Appearance of the divine Glory to them in the Scripture Scheme. They take this on Trust from no Man, or Set of Men. If they were not perswaded on this Evidence, they might be Infidels ; for they look on all them who profess to believe the Scriptures, without having this Evidence, as no better than Infidels. They pretend to believe no Whisper of any private Spirit in this Matter ; because all Spirits must be tried by the Scriptures. They reject all Church Authority in this Case ; because all the Authority that any Church can lawfully pretend to, must be founded in the Scriptures. They look on the Scriptures as a Revelation supposing Nature's Light, and supporting it, by the divine Authority applied to the Consciences of Men, in Opposition to all false Reasonings ; and not only so, but chiefly, making a new Discovery of GOD, suitable to the Condition of Sinners, and furnishing us with a new Set of Principles, with respect to the Salvation of Sinners, that were not discoverable by the Light of Nature, and manifesting

festing more of the divine Glory than is to be seen in all his Works beside, which he is pleased to make Men of the meanest Capacities to perceive. They see no Method of attaining to eternal Life, consistent with the Judgment of GOD against our Sin, which Nature's Light shews us, but only that Method proposed in the Scriptures. In short, they find the Evidence against Atheism, in *the Things that are made*, supported by the Scriptures, against Exceptions that are drawn from the Appearance of Sin, and its Consequences in the World; so that they must either be Athiests or Christians.

A. Which is not an ill Conclusion.

Q. Well; it seems they believe upon the View they themselves have of the Scripture Doctrine by Illumination; and they look on it, not meerly as a new Edition of Nature's Light, corrected and amended from the Corruptions of false Reasoning, but especially as a new Set of Principles helping out Sinners where the Light of Nature shews nothing, and shewing itself to come from GOD. After this, I suppose they will not trouble themselves to shew the Agreeableness of every Thing in this Revelation to the Reason of Mankind: Scripture Testimony will be enough to them; and they'll be independent of the Authority of any Set of Priests, as to the true Sense of Scripture: They must still see with their own Eyes. And so far I must own they are in the Right, though I do not understand the Evidence upon which they believe. But how come they by their Sense of the Scriptures, whereby they differ from other Christians?

X. They who admit the Truth of the Scriptures because they conceive them agreeable to their Reason, will admit nothing in the Interpretation that is above their Reason; and so that Reason of theirs is the true Standard and Rule of what they call their Faith. And these that receive the Truth of the Scriptures by Tradition, or Church Authority, will receive no Interpretation but what is agreeable to that Tradition, and to the Creeds and Confessions of that Church whose Authority they depend on; and so that Tradition, and these Forms of Faith, are indeed the Rule and Standard of their Faith, and not the Scriptures, whatever they may pretend. But this People of whom we are speaking, have not so received the Truth of the Scriptures.

A. But

A. But others profess to receive the Scriptures as a Revelation above Reason, and to believe them by the Help of Illumination as well as they; and yet they walk by the Rule of Tradition, and human Forms of Faith, in the Interpretation of the Scripture, and contend earnestly for these Forms.

X And you may say too, That they pretend to follow the first Separatists from the *Roman* Church, who contended for the Scripture as the Interpreter of Scripture; but in all this they act most inconsistently, as we have been hinting. These who at first separated from the Church of *Rome*, publish'd Confessions, to clear themselves, and let all Men know how they understood the Scripture, taking it as its own Interpreter; and withal shew'd themselves ready, as to any Points wherein they misunderstood the Scripture, to change their Mind, whenever they should be corrected by the Scripture; and this appeared evidently in the different Confessions publish'd by the Brethren of *Bohemia*. But, in Process of Time, the Protestant Confessions came to be fix'd Forms, and Standards of sound Doctrine, and are held to be fitter to direct Men to the true Sense of the Scripture, and to distinguish Truth from Error, and to guard against Heresy, than the bare Bible, which is appeal'd to by all Hereticks. And now Protestants, who refuse the Name of Infallibility, have their Tradition, Fathers, Councils and Standards of Faith, from which they hold it as unlawful to depart, as the *Romanists* do from theirs. In Opposition to this palpable Apostacy from the Profession of the Scripture as its own Interpreter, occasioned by the drawing up and publishing of these first Confessions against the *Roman* Church, the People of whom we are speaking, profess to hold fast *the Form of sound Words* that the first Churches receiv'd from the Apostles, which is only to be found in their Writings.

Q. Seeing they hold the Scripture as its own Interpreter, let me understand how they go to Work to understand the Scripture by itself.

X. Supposing the Evidence upon which they believe the Scripture to be the Key that opens the Scripture to them, they look on the New Testament as the only certain and true Explication of the Old, and on them both as mutually illustrating one another; because the *Apostles said none other*

other Things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come; and, in all their Writings, are continually referring, one Way or other, to some Passage of the Old Testament Scripture. And as they maintain, That no Prophecy of that old Scripture is of any private Interpretation, or capable to be applied according to the Mind and Will of any but the Author himself, they refuse to admit any Interpretation of the Old Testament that has no Foundation in the New Testament, which they firmly hold to be the Whole of God's own Explication and Application of it. Thus they enter into the Spirit of the Apostolick Contention against the Jews; they reject all the Senses of the Prophecies and Applications of the Old Testament that smell of *Judaism*; they contend earnestly for the mystick Sense of the Old Testament concerning the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, and, in Opposition to all Notions of that Kingdom that are any Way like the *Jewish* Notion, they lay great Stresses on these Words, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, and on the Lord's dying Testimony, the good Confession that he witnessed before *Pontius Pilate*, which *Paul* recommends to *Timothy* in the most solemn Manner, viz. *My Kingdom is not of this World: If my Kingdom were of this World, then would my Servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my Kingdom not from hence.--- Thou sayest that I am a King, to this End was I born, and for this Cause came I into the World, that I should bear Witness unto the Truth. Every one that is of the Truth heareth my Voice.*

Θ. They must be for the mystick Sense of the Prophecies, or renounce the most Part of the New Testament, and see little of the Christian Scheme in the Old. And it is very odd, that the Christian Clergy have all along given so little Heed to this dying Testimony of *Jesus Christ*; but it seems, the Account the New Testament gives of the *Jews* puts this Sect in the Panick, as to every Thing that looks like them; and, I suppose, their Imagination will be very warm upon their *Kingdom of Heaven*.

X. That is to say, you would have them to be *Enthusiasts*; yet, I dare say, they cannot be too much afraid of the Spirit and Temper of the *Jews*, as it is described in the New Testament, and every one that's of the Truth, and bears *Christ's Voice*, will acknowledge, that the Glory of his Kingdom

dom is too solid for an overheated Fancy, and indeed sur-
passes all Imagination.

Θ. I beg Pardon for the Provocation I have given to
your Zeal, and beseech you to go on, and inform me how
far this Principle of interpreting the Old Testament by
the New, carries them in Opposition to other zealous
Christians.

X. It sets them in Opposition to all the Principles of Na-
tional Uniformity in Religion, and of the Extirpation of
Hereticks and Schismatics, which ordinarily plead a Foun-
dation in the Old Testament, and in the Constitution of
that earthly Kingdom, because there is none for them in
the New, which represents that earthly Figure, as removed
to give Place to the Truth of it, *the Kingdom of Heaven*.
They hold the whole Business of Extirpation as one of the
clearest Marks of Antichrist, who, in Effect, denies, *That*
Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh; and they call all them who
preach and study to practise Persecution, *Locusts*, that *have*
the King over them, whose Name is Abaddon and Apollyon,
i. e. the Reverse and Opposite of Jesus, who came not to de-
stroy Mens Lives, but to save.

A. Who is for Persecution that has not Power, nor
Hopes to have it? Do we not see all Sects, when at under,
complaining of Persecution? And would you promise u-
pon them, that they would not persecute, and justify
themselves in so doing, if they had but Power, and met
with Provocation?

X. I would not, when I consider how soon Christians
began to persecute after they were eas'd of the Cross by *Con-*
stantine, and when I think of the Spirit of Persecution that
was working among them before, even while they were
Sufferers themselves, notwithstanding all that they read in
the New Testament to the contrary.

But the grand distinguishing Principle of this Sect, as to
the Kingdom of Christ, which is not of this World, and
is not to be defended with the Sword, is so inconsistent with
Extirpation, and with their laying hold on the Means of it,
that they must renounce their whole Scheme, founded on
this Principle, the Moment they think of grasping at world-
ly Power, in any Shape, to defend their Religion, or to ex-
tirpate those who differ from them.

This Principle of theirs, That Christianity cannot be a National Religion, and that Christ's Kingdom is not to be defended by secular Power in the Hands of his Subjects, has not been maintain'd by any since the Time of *Constantine*, at least in the Way they maintain it. And as they find it very evident by Christ's dying Testimony, and the whole Scope of the New Testament, which is to them the only Explication of the Old ; so it, at once, shuts all the Doors at which the Principles of Extirpation can enter into their Profession ; and still the more, that they hold and maintain the *inseparable Connection betwixt the true Profession of Christianity, and the Cross in this Life.*

Q. What do you say ? Do they maintain, that there can be no right Profession of Christianity in this World, without Sufferings ?

X. They judge, that the great Scope of the whole Old Testament Prophecy, is, *The Salvation that's in the Sufferings of Christ, and the following Glory*, which is reported in the Gospel that was preach'd by the Apostles, and that all who are appointed to share in that Salvation are *predestinated to be conform'd to Jesus Christ*, in his Sufferings and the following Glory, as *joint Heirs with him, if so be that they suffer with him, that they may be also glorified together.* And so they hold it as true as Christ's Death and Resurrection, That *if we be dead together, we shall also live together ; if we suffer, we shall also reign together ; if we deny, he also will deny us.*

They take very much Notice of these Words that Jesus Christ spake to his Disciples, after his sharp Rebuke to Peter's Zeal against his Sufferings, *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me : For whosoever will save his Life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his Life for my Sake, shall find it.* And they build much on Paul's Words to Timothy, when forewarning him of the *perilous Times* that should come in the last Days ; and setting his own Sufferings in Opposition to these who have a *Form of Godliness, denying the Power of it*, he says, *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution ; but evil Men and Seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

They observe the Warning Jesus Christ gives his Disciples, That the keeping of his Words will expose them to the same Hatred wherewith he was hated in the World, especially

especially their Obedience to his new Commandment. And they find by Experience, that the least Endeavour after the keeping of his Words, and the open Observation of his new Commandment, by the Ways and Means enjoin'd in the New Testament, raises the Hatred of the World called *Christian*, against them, and puts them upon *bearing his Reproach*.

They consider the Blessedness connected with the Suffering of Reproach and Persecution for Righteousness Sake, and the Promise of Salvation to the faithful Confessors of the Gospel; and, on the other Hand, the Danger of being ashamed of Jesus Christ, and of his Words. And as Reproach and Affliction is connected with the keeping of his Words, without Distinction of Greater and Lesser, they are perswaded that the least of his Words cannot be deny'd, or any Way dissembled in their Practice, thro' the Fear of that Affliction or Reproach, without a manifest Disregard to his Name, and a Contempt of his Promises, and Defiance of his Threatnings. They have nothing to do with any Persecution that is not for his Sake, and for his Words; but they cannot perswade themselves that they love Jesus Christ, if they do not count it the greatest Honour they can attain to in this World, to suffer Shame for his Name.

Q. After this, I think we need not suspect them of Self-interest in their Interpretations of the Scriptures.

A. Yet they speak of attaining to Honour, and much Self-interest lies there. As all Sects profess the greatest Veneration for their Martyrs, so, suffering Persecution for Conscience Sake, has a Tendency to draw the Esteem of Mankind with so great Strength, that I have often wonder'd at the Dexterity of the Priests, who have been capable to withdraw it, and even to restrain the Pity of their People from them that suffer by the Inquisition, yea, to turn it into Joy, at their Acts of Faith.

X. They do indeed speak of Honour, but not the Honour of this World, which must be renounced by them who seek the Honour that cometh from GOD only, in the Way of suffering Shame from the World for Christ's Name's Sake. They speak of the Honour of being conformed to the Son of GOD, and having Fellowship with him who humbled himself and became obedient to the

Death, even the Death of the Cross, enduring it, and despising the Shame; and this, as connected with the Honour of being conformed to him, in his high Exaltation on the right Hand of GOD. The Gospel does not propose to extirpate the Sense of Honour, and the Desire of Glory out of human Nature, which was originally fram'd for Glory and for Dominion; for it points out Humiliation, Reproach and Disgrace, as the hardest Thing in Suffering; and it calls us to seek after the Honour that comes from GOD only, and his Kingdom that he will give in the World to come, and to comfort ourselves with the Hope of this Honour and this Dominion, while we deny ourselves as to the Glory and Dominion of this World, and follow Christ, bearing our Cross. This is the grand Interest, the true Honour, subservient to the Glory of GOD, and consistent with humble Subjection to him. And this is the Interest and the Honour that the first Christians had Respect unto in their Sufferings, denying themselves to every Thing else: Nor can it be well alledg'd that they had any Thing else in view, till the Time when something of the Honour due to GOD began to be paid to Martyrs, and annual Days observed to their Honour.

Q. But this will make few Sufferers for Christ, and a few Christians. The Bulk of them that go under that Name will never subscribe to this, till they find some Method of explaining it away, or evading the Force of it. Nor shall I easily believe that they themselves will come fully up to it; while, at the same Time I must own, it is pretty clear in the New Testament.

X. They are far from denying that there are few Christians; neither do they themselves pretend to have attain'd to the Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings, being made conformable to his Death: But this they constantly maintain, That they cannot look on themselves as Christians except in so far as they are following after it. And when any of their own Company fall openly short of this, they fall immediately under their Discipline, which is according to their Doctrine.

Q. I reckon by this, we need not be afraid of a great Following to them among Christians

X. They themselves do not expect it. Yea, they would suspect themselves of too much Conformity to this World.

de the Multitude of mistaking them very far, if they should
 Ho come after them. The Multitude that sought to make Je-
 on us a King, left him when they perceived the Drift of his
 se to Doctrine.

A. They are indeed few; but it is a great Question, if
 any two of them could stand together under the thorow
 Exercise of such a Discipline. And can any Thing be more
 ridiculous than a grave Pretence to the Exercise of a Dis-
 cipline that it is manifest human Nature could never
 bear?

X. It is above Nature to be a Christian, as the Practice of
 Christianity depends on the Belief of supernatural Prin-
 ciples. And, though human Nature be greatly corrupted,
 I suppose you may see the Necessity of a superior wicked In-
 fluence to bear it out in the *Spanish* Acts of Faith. If this
 be not impossible, you cannot tell how far human Nature
 may be determined to act to the contrary, by a superior good
 Influence.

Hypocrites may lurk, for a While, under the Severity of
 the Christian Discipline, as they did from the Beginning,
 but it would be very ridiculous to say, that, because there are
 many Hypocrites, there is no Body sincere. In other Cases
 you would laugh at such an Inference as this. Many are
 carried far in the Pursuit of eternal Life, who do not, at
 Bottom, prefer it to the Life that now is: Therefore,
 there are none pursuing it who are ~~not~~ determined to prefer
 it to this Life.

Q. But you have not yet told me what are these Principles
 above Nature, or that Nature's Light could not discover,
 that they pretend to see in the Scriptures, while they inter-
 pret it only by itself.

X. They take the Doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation,
 Predestination, the Imputation of *Adam's* Sin and of Christ's
 Righteousness, the mystical Union of Christ and his Church,
 the Resurrection and Reign of the Just, the general Resur-
 rection and Judgment of the Unjust, and the Restitution
 of all Things; I say, they take these Doctrines just as they
 stand in the Scriptures, though I know not if they will use
 all the Words wherein I have, for Brevity, expressed them;
 because they are not all Scripture Words: But they hold
 these Doctrines to the full of what you can think the New
 Testament declares, while it testifies the Resurrection of Je-
 sus

Jesus Christ from the Dead, as that wherein the Truth of the whole is manifested

Q. To be plain with you, so would I, if I could believe the Scripture. But these very Doctrines so plainly delivered there, as influencing all truly Christian Practice, which is made to depend necessarily on the Faith of them, are still shocking to me. And I heartily despise the Method of recommending the Scriptures to my Belief, by smoothing the Doctrines in such a Manner, as to make the Scriptures say other Things than they really say. Yea, I doubt if there be Men be honest Christians, who would make us Christians at the Rate of giving up to us, on the Matter, the main distinguishing Doctrines of Christianity. And I very much question, if they would have taken so much Pains in the Defence of Christianity, had not their Interest lien in it one Way or other.

X. Where's your Charity! You cannot answer them, and that perhaps frets you.

Q. Their own Concessions go far to ruin their Arguments: And the Truth is, I don't see that I would differ so very much from what I now am, by becoming a Christian in their Way of it, that the Change should be worth the Pains taken to make it. The *Socinian* and *Arian* Christians would only have me acknowledge a dignified and Creature-God, capable of divine Worship. And the *Arminian* Christians would teach me some Way to profess the Merit and the Grace of Jesus Christ, but leave me at last just where I am, as to human Merit and the Power of Nature.

X. The People I am describing insist much on the Corruption of human Nature by *Adam's Sin*; and they carry this far. Their Account of Mankind agrees pretty much with the Author of the Fable of the Bees.

A. But, I suppose, they do not enter into his Design, nor perceive the plain Tendency.

Q. I shall not doubt of the Badness of the Design; yet I reckon they agree with the Author, as he appears to agree with the Scripture. But what Delight can Men take in representing themselves, and their own Species, in such a horrible Shape?

X. Whatever Designs Men may have in representing human Nature in that Shape, the Corruption of human Nature is a sad Truth, evident from the Course of the World in all Coun-

f the countries, and at all Times, and every Man may see it in himself, that has the Courage to bring his Actions under a strict Examination. And the Christian's Delight lies not here, but in the Appearance of the divine Glory in our Recovery from that Corruption, and in the beautiful Image of GOD in Jesus Christ, to which Scripture Revelation, and the Power that attends it, conforms us, which appears the more glorious in restoring us. The plain Design of the Scripture Account of Mankind, is the same with the Design of a Shade in a fine Picture. The plain Tendency is to go to the Bottom of our Wound, in order to heal it; and they who will not bear the first, have no Mind to the last.

Q. I am not now to dispute these Things : But I perceive by this, they will not be easily taken with the most specious pretences of the Religious of any Party. And they must, of Course, be very uncharitable both to themselves and others.

X. So they are, in your Sense of Charity ; but, at the same Time, they make a deal of Work about Charity, in their own View of it.

Q. And, pray, what is that ?

X. Their Charity is, *The Love of the Truth, as it is in Jesus*; it is Love to the *just GOD the Saviour*, as manifested in that Truth, in Opposition to all Idols; it is Love to all the Children of GOD, who are of the Truth, for the Truth's sake which dwelleth in them.

This Charity, in the Practice of it, must be precisely regulated by the New Testament. And as they know nothing that brought them together, or that keeps them together, but that Word of the Truth of the Gospel written in the New Testament, they profess to follow after the Gospel Charity among themselves, and to study the Observation of Christ's new Commandment of brotherly Love, in all the outward Expressions and Means of it, that are pointed out in the New Testament, from the highest to the lowest. And so they observe the Feasts of Charity, the washing of one another's Feet, and the Christian Salutation, or Kiss of Charity, which (however ridiculous it may be to many Christians) they find no less than five Times expressly enjoined in the New Testament. As to Offences arising among them, they profess the strict Observation of this Commandment of Jesus Christ, *If thy Brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell*

tell him his Fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy Brother; but, if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that, in the Mouth of two or three Witnesses, every Word may be established: And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an Heathen Man, and a Publican. And, as Charity never faileth while any Thing of Christianity remains in the World, they maintain, That we ought never to fail in the Observation of any Deed of brotherly Love that the New Testament points out to us, either by express Precept, or the Practice of all the first Christians.

They insist on Forbearance in brotherly Love among them in whom the Scripture Character of a Christian appears in any tolerable Measure. When they are once agreed in this, viz. *To count all Things Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ, that they may win him, and be found in him, having his Righteousness, and that they may know him, and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable unto his Death, if, by any Means, they may attain to that Resurrection of the Dead, then they walk together in brotherly Love, forbearing one another in many Things wherein they may be differently minded, through different Measures of the Knowledge of the Truth.* And they hold themselves obliged to abstain from the Use of indifferent Things, for the Offence of weak Brethren. But, to forbear any in a palpable Transgression of the Law of Forbearance, and to indulge any one in the Fulfilment of any of the Lusts of this World, would be the very Reverse of their brotherly Love and Charity, which *rejoyceth not in Unrighteousness, but rejoyceth in the Truth.*

As their Charity delights in all them that *are of the Truth, for the Truth's Sake*, so it works in a Way of Goodwill toward all Men, because of the unknown Elect among all Sorts of Men, without Distinction, whom GOD will have to be saved, and to come unto the Knowledge of the Truth. And thus their Charity is the Image of the divine Goodwill to Men, manifested in the Word of the Truth of the Gospel, and the Imitation of his Long-suffering toward his Elect, in all Generations, and among all Sorts of Mankind; Therefore, they profess *Long-suffering and Kindness*, not only towards the Brethren, but even towards the Enemies of the Gospel;

Gospel; and their Charity is not provoked* to Revenge by bad Usage, nor can it consist with devising Harm † to any. But, on the contrary, it prompts to the Obedience of that Command of Jesus Christ, *Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

They carry the Matter of Alms and doing Good to all Men, specially to the Household of Faith, as high as John Baptist did in his Doctrine, and as Jesus Christ did when the Pharisees (who paid Tithes of all, and gave Alms upon Honour) ridiculed him, and when his own Disciples were astonished at his Words. Instead of making rich, by laying up for ourselves Treasures of corruptible Things on the Earth, they press making rich toward God, by laying up Treasures in Heaven, i. e. by Alms-giving, and selling what we have to give Alms. They charge them that are rich in this World not to trust in uncertain Riches, but, in Opposition to that, to shew their Trust in the living GOD, by doing Good, becoming rich in good Works, and by their Readiness to distribute, and Willingness to communicate, so laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life. They put the Poor in Mind of the Widow's Mite, and set before them the Example of the Churches of Macedonia, whose Joy, in a great Trial of Affliction and deep Poverty, abounded to the Riches of their Liberality. In a Word, they maintain, That both Rich and Poor are indispensibly obliged, by the Gospel-Law of Charity, not to do well to themselves only, but to deny themselves, in doing all good Offices in their Power to all Men, especially to them who are of the Household of Faith.

And they are very positive in this, That true Charity is distinguished by Self-denial, after the Example of Jesus Christ; and that it is utterly inconsistent with Pride, which must be the Principle that influences a Man, who has not Charity, to give all his Goods to feed the Poor. True Charity envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, (by exercising us in great Matters, or in Things too high for us) seeketh not her own.

D

You

* ὃν παροξύνεται. † ὃν λογιζεται τὸ κακόν.

Θ. You have given me a long Lecture on Charity, and you have had my Attention; yet I cannot profess myself a Believer of this *Self-denying Gospel-Charity*: For, I own it is a little above my Reach; only this much I perceive, That the Notion you would give me of it, differs widely from my Idea of *disinterested Benevolence*.

X. I expected, that their Scripture-Charity would find as little Credit with you, as your natural disinterested Benevolence has with them. Neither indeed can you believe it, far less feel any Thing of it in yourself, without believing the Gospel. And if you were blessed with this Charity that *rejoiceth in the Truth*, you would bear all the Things said in the Gospel, and count none of them hard Sayings; yea, and take earnest Heed to them, lest at any Time you should let them slip; you would not be blinded with Prejudice and Disaffection, but gladly believe all Things revealed in the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your Salvation; you would hope for all Things that are promised in the Word of the Truth of the Gospel; and you would patiently endure all the Afflictions of the Gospel, reckoning yourself bound to lay down your Life for the Brethren, and to suffer all Things for the Elect's Sakes.

Θ. Yes. And, at the same Time, I would look on no Man as a proper Christian, except such only as I could see following after this Charity, in the Observation of the Christian Institutions; and I would no more look for or expect to find any truly good Disposition among Men, but what proceeds from Revelation; and thus I would be a fit Member for their Church, whatever should become of me as to the Society of Mankind.

X. They do indeed expect nothing from fallen Mankind, without the Grace of the Gospel, but sinning, and coming short of the Glory of GOD. As to the Societies of this World, they stand by every one's seeking his own Things, and the Good of the whole only in as far as he finds his own Interest in it. And it is very true, Charity that *seeketh not her own* cannot be the Spirit that animates such a Body as a Kingdom of this World. But, at the same Time, it cannot make a Man an unfit Member of such a Society: For *Charity worketh no Ill to our Neighbour*; but disposes us with Cheerfulness to render to all their Dues. And thus, while you were governed by the reigning Principle in the Kingdom that's

that's not of this World, you would be an exceeding peaceable harmless Member of a worldly Kingdom or Common Wealth; you would neither oppress when in Power, nor raise any Sedition or Tumult when at under.

Θ. Excuse me from meddling with your odd Notion of Society. But, as to what you said first, I must observe some Difference betwixt this Doctrine of that People, and the Rule of their Religion: For *Paul* either contradicts himself, or does not carry this Point so far as it seems they do. He acknowledges, That the *Gentiles*, which had not the Law of *Moses*, did, by Nature, the Things contained in the Law, while he affirms, That the Doers of the Law are justified before him with whom there is no Respect of Persons. And you know the Instance of *Cornelius*, to whom *Peter* says, *Of a Truth I perceive, That GOD is no Respector of Persons; but, in every Nation, he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.*

X. I may do much to satisfy you as to this, after I have revised some Notes that I remember I have on these Texts. And, as I have undergone a long Examination at this Time, I find I need some Relaxation: So I'll crave Leave to break off here, and leave the rest to next Meeting.

Θ And you may bring your Notes with you.

D I A L O G U E III.

X. I Have brought my Notes, as you desired.

Θ. And I am ready to hear them.

X. I'll begin with *Cornelius*, if you please.

Θ. As you will.

X. "*Cornelius*, though uncircumcised, was a Worshipper of the GOD of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, as a Proselyte of the Gate; for he was of good Report among all the Nation of the Jews, as one that feared GOD; And therefore, he cannot well be supposed wholly ignorant of that Promise to *Abraham*, In thy Seed shall all Nations of the Earth be blessed. Yea, *Peter* says expressly to him and his Company, Ye know the Word which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the Baptism which

“ John preached. So that *Cornelius* cannot be look'd on as a
 “ Stranger to Revelation, or as an Unbeliever. His Know-
 “ ledge of the true GOD, as revealed to the *Jews*, influ-
 “ enced him to fear him in praying to him alway, and to work
 “ Righteousness, in giving much Alms to the People.

“ Peter, perceiving, from what he had heard of this *Corne-*
 “ *lius*, and from his own Vision, that GOD was now clean-
 “ sing the Uncircumcised, and taking them into his Church,
 “ as well as the Circumcised, expresses himself in these re-
 “ markable Words, *Of a Truth I perceive, that GOD is no*
 “ *Respecter of Persons; but, in every Nation, he that feareth*
 “ *him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him,* accor-
 “ *ding to the Word which he sent unto the Children of Israel,*
 “ *preaching Peace by Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all.* Our
 “ Translators have cut off the latter Part of the Sentence
 “ from the first, in the Middle of a very common Greek Con-
 “ struction, and joined it to the following Sentence, by the
 “ Supplement, (*I say*) without the least Foundation for it in
 “ the Greek Text, and thereby they have rendred the whole
 “ Passage very involved, and broke the Connection of
 “ Peter's Discourse: For Jesus Christ, his being Lord of all,
 “ manifestly respects GOD's accepting them, of every
 “ Nation, without Difference, that fear him and work
 “ Righteousness. But the Supplement (*According to*) as it
 “ has a Foundation in the Greek Construction, makes the
 “ whole Passage easy, and leaves no Shadow of a Founda-
 “ tion for any Objection to be drawn from it, against the
 “ great Scope of the whole Scripture.”

⊙ You are acting the Critick, I see, and correcting the
 Translation; but it is a Loss you have not noted down the
 Words of the Greek Text.

X. Here is a Greek Testament, you may read them your-
 self, and be satisfied —

“ Θ. Αλλ' ἐν παντί ἔθνη ὁ εὐαγγελιστὴς αὐτὸν, καὶ ἐργαζόμε-
 “ νος δικαιοσύνην, δεκτὸς αὐτῷ ἐστίν. Τὸν λόγον οὖν ἀπέστειλε
 “ τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ. εὐαγγελίζομενος εἰρήνην διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χρι-
 “ στοῦ. οὗτός ἐστι πάντων Κύριος ὅτι οἱ οἶδατε τὸ γενόμενον
 “ ῥῆμα —” You render δεκτὸς τὸν λόγον, *accepted according*
to the Word, by supplying κατὰ. And indeed it cannot be
 denied there is such a Greek Construction; Yet it would
 seem the Translators have been seeking a Verb for the Ac-
 cusative τὸν λόγον, and could find none till they came down

το ὀιδάτε. But ὑμεῖς ὀιδάτε τὸ γινόμενον ῥῆμα, looks no Way like the resuming of τὸν λόγον: It seems plainly to be the Beginning of a new Sentence. The constructing of τὸν λόγον with ὀιδάτε, has involved the Discourse, and obliged them likewise to depart from the Greek, by saying, *The Word which GOD sent*, instead of *the Word which he sent*, as it is in the Greek, referring more to the foregoing Words than the Construction of the Translators could well allow.

X. You shall be the Critick and the Translator; and I must own it is exceeding fair in you to give me so much Help against yourself.

Θ. And you will not readily find Fault when I speak for you; but I look not on the Narrowness of the Scripture-Charity, as any Argument for the Truth of the Scripture against me. And to shew you, that I am not unwilling to believe it to be as narrow as you would have it, I promise you as fair a Hearing to your Notes on the Passage concerning the Gentiles their *doing by Nature the Things contain'd in the Law*.

X. But you must not lay aside the Greek Testament. Turn over to the second Chapter of the Romans, and look at the Text while I read.

“ The Phrase, τὰ τῶ νόμου, as it is here translated, *The Things contain'd in the Law*, is capable to be improved against the main Scope of the Apostle's whole Discourse, and against the plain Design of the Text. “ But τὰ τοῦ νόμου, may be more agreeably rendred, *The Offices of the Law*, or, *The Things that pertain to the Law to do*. And this is supported by the Words immediately following, *These having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves, which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts*.

“ The Apostle's plain Design is to shew, That the Judgment of GOD against Sin must be executed impartially, “ and without any Respect to the Jews, who had the “ written Law above the Gentiles, who had also sinn'd, tho' “ they had not the written Law, and could not be judged “ by it. And whereas the Jews gloried in the giving of “ the Law to their Nation, he tells them plainly, That the “ hearing of the Law could not justify them, but the doing of it; and if they did not the Law, they had no “ Reason to glory over the Gentiles, by their having or “ hearing

" hearing the Law : For the *Gentiles*, who had not the Law
 " written to them in Tables of Stone, with the Finger of
 " GOD, and to whom he spoke it not as he did to them,
 " yet wanted not a Law. To shew this, and likewise to
 " manifest the Justice of the Judgment of GOD against the
 " *Gentiles*, who should perish without the Law of *Moses*,
 " he says, *For when the Nations which have not the Law, do*
 " *by Nature the Offices of the Law, these having not the Law, are*
 " *a Law unto themselves, which shew the Work of the Law writ-*
 " *ten in their Hearts, their Conscience witnessing together, and Rea-*
 " *sonings betwixt one another, accusing or else apologizing.* Thus
 " he shews from the Testimony of the Conscience of the
 " *Gentiles*, and from their Reasonings among themselves,
 " mutually accusing and defending in the Way of Excuse
 " or Apology, that the *Gentiles*, who had not the Law of
 " *Moses*, did naturally to themselves what belong'd to the
 " Law to do ; so that they were a Law to themselves. From
 " this no more can be inferr'd, but that, having a Law
 " as well as the *Jews*, they justly perish'd without the *Jewish*
 " Law ; and, if the *Jews* obey'd not their Law, they had no
 " Reason to glory over the *Gentiles*, who had not the Law
 " promulgate to them as they had it. Thus this Passage
 " is perfectly agreeable to the Apostle's general Scope,
 " which is to manifest, That both *Jews* and *Gentiles* are all
 " under Sin ; and that every Mouth must be stopped by
 " GOD's Law, which, whether written on Tables of Stone,
 " or in the Hearts of all, makes all the World subject unto
 " his Judgment against Sin. "

©. There is indeed a great Difference betwixt obeying a
 Law, and having a Law made known to us, without which
 we could not be Transgressors. For my Part, I shall not
 doubt, That Christianity supposes the greatest Corruption
 of human Nature, and cannot take Place but in Conse-
 quence of a dispiriting Sense of our own Unworthiness, and
 want of Merit, and a fearful Apprehension of Judgment
 and Wrath ; but the Moral Virtue of the Philosophers aris-
 es from a generous Sense of the Dignity of our Nature,
 and of its Fitness for good and Praise-worthy Actions, and
 from agreeable Sentiments of the divine Goodness.

X. There can be nothing more disagreeable to the infi-
 nitely good Being, than to harden ourselves against that
 Shame and Fear that Nature's Light serves to breed in us,

when

When we have not glorified him as GOD, nor been thankful. And our Hearts are thus darken'd and harden'd by those vain Reasonings, that serve to beget and foster in us that Sense of our Merit, and the Dignity of our Nature, or that shameless Pride, as I call it, which is the strongest bulwark in our Minds against the Gospel of the Grace of GOD, and the Source of all these high Thoughts and Reasonings against Christ, which nothing but the Power of his Resurrection can subdue. And as for the agreeable Sentiments of divine Goodness, connected with this, I cannot express them better than in the Words of a late Poet, reflecting on the Religion of some Females, whose Sentiments of the Deity he represents thus,

He's like themselves, or how could he be good?

*Devoutly thus Jehovah they depose,
The Pure, the Just, and set up in his stead
A Deity, that's perfectly well bred.*

Yet Christianity exalts human Nature, and in the Issue elevates us far beyond what any Philosopher could imagine, and therein glorifies the divine Goodness in such a Manner, as could never enter into the Heart of Man to conceive. And here again we must begin where we broke off, on the Subject of the Goodness of GOD, and our Obedience to the Law of Nature.

Θ. My Comparison, I see, has warm'd your Blood from the Coolness of Criticism, rous'd your Spirits, and made your Words strong; and now you would dispute. But we have not yet broke off our main Subject, and you must have patience with me till we pursue it a little further.

X. My Blood and Spirits, I dare say, owe no less to GOD our Saviour, than to a good Friend: And however your Pulse beat for the Deity, I could venture upon you, that an Indignity offered to your dearest Friend would make your Blood boil; yea I perceive it is not perfectly cool, upon my strong Words against the Dignity of human Nature.

But now resume our Subject, and I agree to pursue it calmly.

Θ. I am satisfy'd your Charity, and the Charity of that Sect

Sect toward Mankind, abstract from the Influence of Revelation upon them, is very agreeable to the Scriptures. But seeing they look for no true Goodness among Men except what flows from Revelation, tell me how much do they expect to find by Means of Revelation?

X. As you must own, Philosophy has not produced Abundance of *Truth*, or of *disinterested Benevolence*, or of *pure and well regulated Self-love* in the Practice of Mankind, and that *the Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* could not arise from the Practice of the most Part of Men, but by the Rule of Contraries; so I plainly tell you, that Sect expects not much from the Generality of Mankind any where, by Means of Revelation.

They speak much, in the Scripture-Style, concerning an Elect Remnant, and believe, That of the great Numbers that hear the Gospel-Call, *few are chosen*. They reckon that Saying of Jesus Christ will hold true in all Ages to the End of the World, *Wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be which go in thereto, because strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it*. And they hold them for false Prophets, that would make the Gate and Way to Life any way wider or broader than Christ has made it in his Word.

They take great Notice of that Distinction betwixt the two Seeds mentioned in the Book of *Genesis*, immediately after the Account of the Fall of Man, and observe the several Instances of that Distinction, from that of *Cain and Abel* still downward. And however great the Number of the Seed of Woman may appear at last, when they are all gather'd out of every Nation; yet in every Age they are the fewest, in Comparison with the Seed of the Serpent, who are the prevailing Party, by whom the Remnant of the Woman's Seed are afflicted and humbled in this World, in Conformity to Christ their Head, till Christ come again, and bring his People out of all Tribulation, and destroy the Serpent and his Seed.

They observe how Revelation, and Religion depending on it, has been always corrupted by the Wickedness of Men professing to embrace it, and that in all its different Periods from *Adam* downward. They speak of the Corruption of Religion as revealed to *Adam*, first by *Cain*, and

then by the Posterity of *Seth*, in mingling themselves with *Cain's* apostate Race, till the Flood, from which only *Noah*, who found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord, and his little Family, were saved.

Next, they take Notice of the Corruption of *Noah's* Religion among his Posterity, and even the Race of *Shem*, (who seem to have been also associated with *Ham's* Children, in building that famous Tower for the Worship of the Heavens) until *Abram* was called alone from the Service of other Gods, and all the Nations suffered to walk in their own Ways from thenceforth, till Christ that Seed of *Abraham* came.

They likewise point out the Corruptions of the Religion of *Moses* among the Posterity of *Jacob*, till Christ came of them, when, though the *Jews*, the Remnant of the Tribes of *Israel*, were very numerous, a very small Remnant of them was sav'd according to eternal Election.

And all this is an Introduction to that which they never fail to enlarge on as they are able, *viz* The Corruption of the Christian Religion by the Wickedness of its Professors, who receiv'd not the Love of the Truth, especially their Leaders, after the Days of the Apostles, which they see clearly foretold in the New Testament. They describe the Corruption of Christianity from its Beginnings, of which *Paul* speaks, when he says, *The Mystery of Iniquity doth already work*, and trace it down to this Day, when they say the Lord is consuming that Evil, which they do not expect to see wholly destroy'd till he come again to Judgment; and they remark this Saying, *When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find Faith on the Earth?*

They place much Religion in abstaining from every Part of that Corruption, as far as they can find it out by the New Testament, where pure and intire Christianity is to be seen; and particularly, they fly from all Appearance of Subjection to Church Authority supported with secular Power; which they call Antichrist, the Man of Sin, the Beast, and the Whore sitting on the scarlet coloured Beast.

Q. What would you have me say, or what do you really think yourself of a Revelation, design'd for the Benefit and Help of Mankind, that was shut up from most Part of Men in a Corner, and there cover'd with a Vail for so many

Ages; and that, when publish'd to the World, proves beneficial in the Issue to so very few?

X. I suppose you reckon I should be against the Use of the Load-stone, and not take the Jesuites Bark for the Ague, because the Use of these Things remain'd so long hid from Mankind; and you would not have me make use of an excellent Medicine, because the most Part of Men slight or abuse it: But, as I believe all these will be benefited by this Revelation for whose Benefit it declares itself originally design'd, I suppose your Question will press you a little more, when you apply it to your *Reason of Mankind*, and *Principle of Moral Virtue*, plac'd in Man, to lead him to Happiness in the Way of the Practice of that Virtue, which, however finely it may be talk'd of, must be own'd to be a very great Rarity among Men.

A. And what should I then think of this, That there is no true Religion but the Christian; and if true Christianity be enquir'd for, it is to be found only pure and intire in Books?

Q. They seem to go a great Length that Way; they do indeed make it very rare, but, at the same Time, risque something on the Reality of it.

A. And much more has been ventur'd on the contrary.

Q. So much the greater Fools were they that did so, when they had no Hope beyond this Life: For, what Good can a Man propose to himself or others, by giving up his Life on this Point, That there is no Rule of Right and Wrong, and no Hope beyond Death?

X. Even the same Thing these propose to themselves, who venture their Lives and all their Hopes to save their Honour in Duels.

A. And may not this be likewise suspected in those who pretend to suffer for Conscience Sake?

X. It is true, a Man may give his Body to be burned, and want Charity; in which Case it is only Pride, in some Shape or other, that moves him; and Sufferers ought narrowly to examine themselves on this Head: But there is no such Room for others to question their Sincerity, as in the Case just now mentioned. We are even to think better of them who suffer on Points of Religion, as to which their Consciences are misguided, than of others whose Consciences are better inform'd, and yet shun Suffering, as preferring their

their Interests in this Life to their eternal Interest, and the Friendship of this World to the Friendship of GOD. But how can they be thought well of, that pretend to state their Sufferings against the very Being of Religion?

A. At least this may be thought of them, That they are firmly perswaded there is none.

Q. I may freely grant, that Martyrdom should pass for a good Proof of the Perswasion of the Sufferers; but, from what is said, it may be evident, that it cannot be admitted as any Proof of the Truth of that whereof they are firmly perswaded.

X. If you grant it a Proof of the real Perswasion of the Sufferers, it will arise upon you, in some Case or other, to a Proof of the Truth of that same Thing they suffer for.

Q. Cost what it will, I shall not retract my Grant without a Reason; but I'll be glad to know in what Case Martyrdom comes to a Proof of the Truth of the Cause.

X. In the Case of a plain Fact, whereof the Martyrs cannot be ignorant: For Instance, suppose a Dozen of plain Men, throw Martyrs on this Point of Fact, That they themselves, in Presence of many others, did, with the greatest Caution, and Fear of being imposed on, evidently see with their Eyes, an intimate Acquaintance alive, handle him with their Hands, eat and drink with him, and converse with him familiarly and frequently, for the Space of forty Days, and all this after he was notoriously put to Death by his Enemies, who, having heard that he had said before his Death, After three Days I will rise again, took Care to see him thoroughly dead, and to have him secured in his Grave, as far as human Security can go: And further, That, after all, while he was conversing with them, and appointing them his Witnesses of what they had seen and heard, promising them Assistance from Heaven, (which they afterward received, to the Conviction of Thousands) they saw him evidently taken up from among them into Heaven: If the Martyrdom of these Men who suffer'd upon this, be a Proof that they really believ'd it, or were most firmly perswaded of it, it must be, at the same Time, a Proof that the Fact is true, that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is true, and therefore that the Whole of

Christianity, imported in that Fact, and wholly depending upon it, is true.

Q. I confess this is what I did not expect, and I promise you I shall consider it: For you have told me already, That you will not admit *Church Authority supported with secular Power*, or any Thing that pertains to that, as a Proof against it, because you say it was expressly foretold by these Martyrs for the Truth of the Resurrection.

X. There can be no greater Enemies to the Gospel than the *Jews* were from the Beginning; and yet, by a very extraordinary Providence, they continue in the same Enmity to this Day, ready to be Martyrs for the Old Testament, upon which the New is grafted; and the more opposite that *Church Authority supported with secular Power* can be shew'd to be unto the Testimony of the Martyrs for the Truth of the Resurrection, it was still the more fit a Means for handing that Testimony to us.

A. As this Sect of which you are speaking pretends to depend wholly on the Scripture, I think this is a very remarkable Benefit they owe to *Church Authority supported with secular Power*, which they certainly ought to acknowledge.

X. So they do, even as they also acknowledge what they owe to the *Jews*, while they reckon that *Church Authority* as opposite to the Design of the New Testament, as *Judaism* is to the Scope of the Old: But in this they especially acknowledge, with Thankfulness and Adoration, the marvellous divine Providence, in bringing so great a Good to them out of so much Evil.

Q. Nothing can be more disagreeable to the Description given of Christianity in the New Testament, than *Church Authority supported with secular Power*. This was to be seen in Perfection in the Church of *Rome*, and the Protestant Clergy have copy'd after that Church in this Matter to their Power, and fully as far as the Nature of their Cause would allow: But do this People imagine, that a Nation of this World will ever be govern'd without a publick Leading in Religion, or without a National Church of any Kind?

X. They have no such Imagination: For, from the Rise of *Nimrod's Kingdom*, which behoved to have its Religion, as I hinted before, no Kingdom of this World has wanted a publick Leading in Religion.

When

When the Roman Empire was stript of its old Form of Religion by *Constantine*, it put on in its Stead that Form of Christianity which ought to be called *Antichristian*, i. e. a Profession of the Christian Religion fitted to a Kingdom of this World, and made consistent with the Pursuit of worldly Honour, and Wealth, and Pleasure, and with all these Practices without which no Nation of this World can be powerful and flourishing; a Christianity consistent with all our worldly Interests, and whereby we are Christians in one Country, just as Men are Heathens or Mahometans in another.

This is national Christianity, or, as the Apostle calls it, *A Form of Godliness denying the Power of it*; the very Opposite of that Profession of the Name of Christ, which was the Effect of *GOD's visiting the Nations, to take out of them a People for his Name*, agreeably to the Words of the Prophets about the Nations.

This Form of Christianity, separated from the Cross, and stated in Opposition to the ancient Work of Faith, and Labour of Love, and Patience of Hope, was the Religion of the Roman Empire, after it cast off its old Religion. And when that Empire was broke into several independant Kingdoms, these (by a very strange Providence) remained united, as one Empire still, in that Form of Christianity, and in the Body of the Clergy, who were the greatest Gainers by it, and therefore, maintained it, and carried it to Perfection, by the Power of those Kings who gave them their *Strength and Power to make Uniformity*, till, at last, the LORD began to consume this *Man of Sin by the Spirit of his Mouth*; and tho' his Consumption be still going on, yet there is Reason to believe he will not be utterly destroyed, but by the *Brightness of the LORD's coming to Judgment*.

So that, till the Nations be demolished, the national Form of Christianity will remain in some Shape or other.

Θ. You are going, I see; but I have not done yet. I must, sometime, examine you a little further, and particularly on these Names and Titles, *The Beast*, and *the Whore*, and *Antichrist*, and the *Man of Sin*, as importing the great Evil against which they state their Profession of Christianity; and I must hear you upon this consuming of the Man of Sin.

X. To-morrow, if you please, mean Time farewell.

D I A.

DIALOGUE IV.

Q. NOW you are come to be examined; and I suppose you are in Readiness to answer my Questions.

X. I have thought on the Subject frequently, but cannot answer a Question till I hear it.

Q. In the first Place, then, I ask what the Sect of which we have been speaking means by *the Beast*, or how they apply this Title to *Church Authority supported with secular Power*?

X. They think the *Beast* stands in the Prophecies, as an Emblem of Tyrannical Power: And the Clergy have exercised such a Power in the World two Ways.

1. They have ruled the World by the Strength and Authority of the ten Kings who gave them their Kingdom, to make Uniformity *. And this is the *Beast* with ten Horns.

2. They have also a pretended spiritual, but really tyrannical Power, which they exercise in the Name of Christ, over the Consciences of Men. And this is the *Beast* with two Horns as a Lamb, but speaking as a Dragon, who exerciseth all the Power of the first *Beast*, in his Presence. This is the same with the false Prophet.

This pretended spiritual and ecclesiastick Power or Jurisdiction, is exercised by an ecclesiastical Frame of Government, made after the Model of the secular or civil Government; by a regular Subordination of Church Courts, or Church Officers, or both together; though it be disputed whether a general Council, or the highest Bishop be the supreme. And this is the *Image of the Beast that has ten Horns*.

Q. I should think this makes your People (for so I may call them) rigidly tenacious of the precise Plan of the Order and Government of the Church that they see in the New

* *ποινισται μιαν γυνωιν.* Rev. xvii. 17.

New Testament, lest they should lose their Christian Liberty, and pay Homage to this *Image of the Beast*.

X. Perfectly right! True Christian Liberty cannot be enjoyed, nor can Christianity be truly professed, or outwardly practised, but in that very Order which is laid down for it in the New Testament: And though there be no Licence to fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh in that Order, and it be attended with several Hardships and Inconveniencies, yet they think they ought to rejoyce in the Liberty to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, which they find in that Order, and they pity the Worshippers of the *Image of the Beast*, who are but poor Slaves and *Servants of Corruption*, in midst of all their Enjoyments and worldly Ease.

Q. But I am afraid their Zeal against the Beast with ten Horns, and his Image, may lead them, in some Cases, to be obnoxious to the Magistrate, even in this Land of religious Liberty.

X. Your Suspicion may be not ill grounded, as to Places where Magistrates either account it their Honour, or find it someway their Interest to serve the Clergy, especially seeing no Man can be admitted Burgeßs or Free-man in any Corporation, without an Oath to support the prevailing Religion; and seeing all must make some Shew of observing the Holy-Days that the Church pleases to appoint.

Q. Doubtless it must be very refreshing to the Clergy, under the Contempt that now begins sensibly to afflict them, to consider the Allegiance that's sworn to them in Cities and Corporations, and to see the whole Nation bowing down to them on their appointed Day.

But what becomes then of the Episcopal Dissenters from the established Church; I mean such as profess Conscience in refusing to swear Allegiance to the Powers that be, and to pray for them? Do they swallow down this Oath? Or, do they make any Shew of observing the Presbyterian Holy-Days, which possibly have been sometimes appointed by the Clergy, even to shew their Power?

X. If you consider the Situation of these Dissenters, with respect to the State, you will think their Enemies would have a vast Advantage against them, if they did not juggle a little in such Things.

Q. This is but a sorry Excuse for Perjury and Hypocrisy in them who yet pretend to fear an Oath.

X. And

X. And what will be your Excuse for the Pretence of a Regard to Christianity and the Scripture, in Books written plainly against the Christian Religion and the Scriptures? What say you of the Candour and Ingenuity of the *Christian Deist*, as an Interpreter of the Scripture? Do you think he believes as he would have us believe, that *Paul* was such another as himself? And what is your Vindication of the Truth and Sincerity of the silent Submission to imposed public Standards of Faith, and decent Conformity to the Rules of the prevailing Religion, recommended by a noble Author?

Q. I'll make no Excuse for it. It is not agreeable to Truth, nor consistent with Candour and Ingenuity: And it cannot but be a strong Prejudice in the Minds of ingenuous Men, against the Cause that's managed in such a Manner: But the juggling Way is still more inexcusable in them who profess the Simplicity and godly Sincerity of Christians. And if the prevailing Clergy had as much Value for the Souls of Men as they pretend, would they not be concerned to have the Temptations removed? But, what do I say? Are the Souls of Men able to counter-balance their own Authority in their own Balance?

X. More Charity I beg of you! You seem to have a peculiar Dislike of all Sorts of the Clergy: Yet, why should they be denied their Share in your universal Charity? Are they only destitute of the Principle of disinterested Benevolence? And doth that Principle exert itself in all Statesmen, Lawiers, Physicians, Merchants, Soldiers, and all Sorts of Mechanicks? Or, why may you not expect to find as much of it among the Clergy, with respect to our Souls, as among the Lawiers and Physicians, with respect to our Estates and the Health of our Bodies? Put yourself in their Place, and you will not be highly offended that they refuse not the Magistrates Support to their Authority. And the Removal of the Temptations to Hypocrisy from Dissenters, would work no Change on their Souls to the better. Their Christianity would appear more evidently in resisting them.

Q. Well, you are a fine Advocate for Clergy-men! But, if your People find themselves obliged in Conscience, against the least Mark or Sign of Subjection to the Authority of the Clergy supported by the secular Powers, will they

not be charged, in some Cases, with the Crime of Disobedience to the Magistrate?

X. No Doubt their Enemies will raise a Cry against Disobedience to the Magistrate, when his Orders, in the Execution of the Commands of the Clergy, are not obeyed; and they who make no Scruple of being accessary to Theft and Perjury in the Case of *Cesar's* Tribute, will join heartily in the religious Cry; even as the *Jews* complained to *Pilat* of *Jesus*, and raised a Cry against him, as opposite to *Cesar's* Kingdom: For, tho' they spirit up Mobs, and raise Seditions themselves when at under, yet, whoever contemns their Authority when the Magistrate supports it, must be, in their Account, against *Cesar*.

But the People I have been describing adhere to GOD's Ordinance of Magistracy, *Gen. ix. 6.* as it is illustrated, *Rom. xiii. Chap.* where the Evil, with respect to which the Magistrate is a Revenger, is only working Ill to our Neighbour, against the second Table of the Law. And these who are most forward in condemning them for refusing Subjection to antichristian Power, are as ready to treat them with cruel Mockings, for a strict Observation of the Christian Law, touching the Magistrate: But they are subject to the Powers that be, because they are so commanded by *Jesus Christ* their Lord, who forbids them, under the highest Pains, to receive any Mark of Subjection to antichristian Power. And when they refuse the *Mark of the Beast*, they shew Subjection to the Magistrate, and to *Jesus Christ*, in patient suffering; for they abhor Mobs as much as they do a national Church.

Q. I do not see how this can hurt civil Society, though, while there is any national Church, it must expose themselves to some Hardships

X. And without these, no Man can live godly in *Christ Jesus*, amidst this present evil World.

Q. There is one Thing concerning the Beast not yet mentioned, that has tormented the Commentators, *viz. his Number, the Number of his Name.* Have you any Thing to say of that?

X. The *Number* of the Beast must, someway, carry in it his Character, for it is the *Number of his Name.* The Scripture uses to set down Numbers in Words, and not in Letters or Figures, except the *Number of the Beast*, and the

opposite Number of the Lamb. The Beast's Number stands in these three Greek Letters, χ ξ , ς . which happens to be Initials of the Words, χ ριστιανός, ξ νός, ς αυρού, i. e. *Christians. Strangers to the Cross*, a very proper Motto for the Beast's whole Company, and a Character that, one Way or other, fits them all, and none other but them. The opposite Number of the Lamb (the Emblem of Christ in his patient suffering, in Opposition to the persecuting Beast) stands in the vii. Chapter of the *Revelation*, expressed in these three Letters, ρ , μ , δ . And these again are the Initials of these three Words, ρ ήματος, μ αρτυρες, δ ιωκόμενοι; i. e. *the persecuted Witnesses of the Word*; which is the very Opposite of the former, and agrees exactly with the Description the *Revelation* gives of the Followers of the Lamb that was slain, in Opposition to the Worshipers of the Beast. It has been observed, that the Number of the Lamb's Company, 144, is mentioned for the Sake of 12, its Square-Root to give us a Description of the true Church, as wholly built on the Doctrine of the 12 Apostles of the Lamb, even as the Church of the Old Testament sprang from the 12 Patriarchs. And this Number 12 is set down in these two Letters, λ , θ which may stand for λ εγάλευμα βασιλείου, *the royal Priesthood*. And if the Number 25 be the Root of the Beast's Number, as *Potter* would have it, then that might be expressed by κ ϵ . κυριότης ἐθνῶν *the Lordship of the Nations* of which the LORD speaks to his Disciples in this Manner, *Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise Authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you: But, whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister, and whosoever will be Chief among you, let him be your Servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his Life a Ransom for many.*

Q. I suppose the *Greeks* and *Romans* used to express their Mottos by the initial Letters; and so I must own your Account of the Number of the Beast's Name is more plain and simple than any I have yet heard; and the opposite Mottos of the two Companies are exactly agreeable to the Doctrine of that Sect about suffering, and to the New Testament. But I am not satisfied with their building so much upon Emblems and dark Sayings, especially when most Part of them are incapable to judge of them, as being unskilled in the original Language.

X. There

X. There is no Doctrine drawn from these Figures, or dark Sayings, but what's all clearly and plainly taught in the New Testament, to the meanest Capacities; which, by the Way, are more capable to receive Instruction by Figures and Emblems, than by Metaphysicks, or mathematical Reasoning. But they do not build on any Thing whereof they are incapable to judge. They observe a most terrible Proclamation of Wrath and Vengeance against all them *who worship the Beast and his Image, and whosoever receiveth the Mark of his Name.* And when they enquire how they shall be free of this most dangerous Thing that's expressed in these dark Words, they find the Opposite of it immediately set before them in the next Words, that are very plain, *viz. Here is the Patience of the Saints; here are they that keep the Commandments of GOD, and the Faith of Jesus.* Whereby they easily understand, that, if they have the Patience of the Saints, in Opposition to persecuting, or yielding the Truth for Fear of suffering, and if they keep the Commandments of GOD, and the Faith of Jesus, as set forth in the Scriptures, in Opposition to all the Commandments and Doctrines of Men, and that with Patience in suffering, then they are free of worshipping the Beast and his Image, and are not receiving the Mark of his Name.

Q. So much for *the Beast*. Let me next hear what your People have to say of *the Whore*.

X. As the true Church is set forth by the Emblem of a Woman, so is the false represented by a Woman, a Whore; that is, a Society that pretends to be the Spouse of Jesus Christ, and the Mother of the Children of GOD, and, under this Pretext, *commits Fornication with the Kings of the Earth.*

Q. And how does she that?

X. They hold this as a strong Presumption of it, That, not content with the Protection and Provision that Jesus Christ bestows on his Church, she betakes herself to the Kings of the Earth, and is defended and provided for by them, and shews herself openly abroad in the Ornaments they have bestowed on her.

And they look on this as a plain Proof of it, That she boasts herself the Mother of Multitudes of Children that appear manifestly never to have been begotten by the Power of Jesus Christ, or by the incorruptible Seed of the Word

that was preached by his Apostles, but by the Power of the Kings of the Earth. In Opposition to this, they hold none for Church Members, but such as appear to be begotten by the Word of Truth, and who are keeping the Commandments of GOD, and have the Testimony of Jesus Christ. And, as a true visible Church must be a Church of the Saints, they cannot look on that as a true Church, that's made up of Members who never appeared to believe on Christ, through the Word of his Apostles, who appear not to have the Testimony of Jesus, nor to be keeping the Commandments of GOD. And they maintain, that the People of GOD are called to come out of such Churches, and to turn away from them, lest they partake of their Sins and their Plagues.

Further, they say this is one of the plain Characters of the Whore, That she persecutes the Remnant of the Woman's Seed, which keep the Commandments of GOD, and have the Testimony of Jesus Christ, and that by the Power of the Kings that commit Fornication with her. And so she appears drunken with the Blood of the Saints, and with the Blood of the Martyrs of Jesus.

Q. But, where shall the Christian Church be found, that will take with this last Thing that they make the Character of the Whore? Churches may own these Facts, That they are defended and provided for by the Kings of the Earth, and that, as they stand defended by these Kings, they have many Children, or Members, that have not been begotten by the Gospel, and cannot properly be called Saints, and that had not been in the Church without the Favour and Countenance of those secular Powers, though they will stoutly deny the Inference your People make from these Facts (which yet wants not a fair Appearance.) But where is the Church that will take with this Fact, That she persecutes them who have the Testimony of Jesus, and keep GOD's Commands; or that she takes Pleasure in shedding the Blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus? Even the Roman Church herself only shews her Zeal for Christ, in persecuting them who deny and blaspheme the Testimony, and disobey GOD's Commands, viz. Hereticks and Schismatics, and, so far is she from delighting in Blood, that the very Inquisitors beg the secular Powers to shew Mercy to those wretched Hereticks and Blasphemers whom they deliver over to them.

Now, if this Character do not apply to the Church of Rome, she cannot, on any Account, be esteemed that Whore in the *Revelation*, that's drunk with the Blood of Christian Saints and Martyrs, far less can any other Church.

X. If we take the Account the *Jews* will give us of the Death of Christ, they were far from persecuting the *Messiah*, or putting him to Death; but, in their great Zeal for the Honour of the Deity, they were taking Care to have a Deceiver, a false Prophet, taken out of the Way, according to the Law of *Moses*, as a Blasphemer, who, by his Doctrine, made himself God, to the great Reproach of the Deity. And so far were they from approving of Persecution, that they highly honoured the Prophets, and righteous Men who suffered in the Days of their Fathers, and declared that they would have had no Part with their Fathers in that Matter: Yet they themselves were acted by the same Spirit that persecuted the Prophets in their Fathers; and on this very Account Jesus Christ says to them, *Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell?* And when Jesus Christ was clear'd by his Resurrection, testify'd to all Nations, and the *Jews* had also persecuted the Witnesses of his Resurrection in their Zeal of GOD, and of his Law given by *Moses*, then the Vengeance of GOD came upon their Nation, for all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous *Abel*.

Neither will all the Pretence that the false Church makes of her Zeal for the Honour of Christ and his Kingdom, vindicate her from the Charge of the Blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus, even tho' she do greater Honour to the Martyrs of former Ages than did the *Jews*, while she persecutes her Hereticks and Schismatics, her false Prophets, or Teachers, and Blasphemers, upon the same Principles, in the same Method, and with the same Spirit and Temper wherewith the Martyrs of former Ages were persecuted. Even that poor Pretext, of praying the secular Arm to pity and spare them that are delivered over to it, serves to condemn her, as it shews she is not wholly ignorant that the Church of Christ ought to be of another *Manner of Spirit* than to *destroy Mens Lives*; while at the same Time she has the People of the Nations and the Kings of the Earth perswaded, that they do *GOD good Service* in destroying them: For she has made them *drunk with the Wine of her Fornication*.

And

And when the Time of the Resurrection of the Just, and the Day of Vengeance shall come, then *in her* will be found the Blood of Prophets and of Saints, and of all that were slain upon the Earth. And all that partake with that pretended Mother Church, (the true Mother of Harlots) in pursuing the Principles of National Uniformity and Extirpation, partake with her in her Sin, and must share in her Plagues.

But certainly this Character of the Whore cannot apply to any Church *that steele* her Ears from hearing of Blood, or that concurs not, directly or indirectly, with the destroying of Mens Lives for Christ's Sake, either by Means of the Magistrate, or by the Hands of the Mob.

Ⓔ. The next Question is about *Antichrist*, which, I would think, must denote Opposition to Christ.

X. But that Opposition must be under a Shew of Regard to him; for *John*, who speaks of Antichrist in his Epistles, bids Christians try the Spirits, lest they should be impos'd on by the fair Shews of false Prophets, and take up with the Spirit of Antichrist, instead of the Spirit of Christ; and this Exhortation had been perfectly needless, if the Spirit of Antichrist did no way pretend to be the true Spirit of Christ, but appear in open and undissembled Opposition to it, as did the *Jewish* Rabbies, and the Heathen Philosophers. *Paul* tells us, the Man of Sin sits in the Temple of GOD, and manages his Opposition there; so that we may say, That *Antichrist* opposes himself to Christ in the Name of Christ.

Ⓔ. At this Rate, you would even comprehend our People under the Designation of Antichrist, as they make a Sort of Pretence to Christianity, and yield a decent Observance to the Rites of the Christian Religion prevailing in their Country.

X. So I might, if the Pretext were not too thin to deceive any Body that's serious about the Gospel; but tho' they had all the Grimace of the Quakers, who do not differ from them at Bottom, they could not be called that Antichrist. They rather seem to be pointed at in these Words of *Peter*, *There shall come in the last Days Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts, and saying, Where is the Promise of his Coming?* And I would take them to be these who speak Evil of the Way of Truth, by Reason of the Antichristian false Teachers, and of the Multitudes following their pernicious Ways.

Ⓔ. And

Q. And how then does Antichrist oppose himself to Christ in the Name of Christ?

X. John describes the Opposition of the grand Antichrist by that of his little Forerunners among the first Christians: For, as Paul tells us, That the *Mystery of Iniquity*, which was at last to come to a great Head, was already working among Christians; so John says, *As ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists*; and again, *This is that Spirit of Antichrist whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the World*. He informs us, That these many Antichrists that were in his Time, departed from the Communion of Saints, as it stood among the first Christians, who, under the Direction of the Apostles, walked together in brotherly Love, in Separation from the World, or in Opposition to the Love of the World, and of the Things of the World, knowing the Truth as it is in Jesus, through his Spirit, whereof they were Partakers, and professing the Hope of the Promise of eternal Life; So that there must be a Departure from these Things in the Case of that great Antichrist, whereby his Opposition to Christ may be manifest, notwithstanding all his Pretences to an Interest in him. Paul calls the same Matter an *Apostacy*, and says, *Men shall depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits*. Now, as the first Perverters of the Gospel departed from the Faith, under a Pretence to it, whereby they were fit to deceive and seduce Christians into a real Opposition to the Faith of Christ, so does that Antichrist depart from the Faith of Jesus Christ, as come in the *Flesh*, in turning back to that old fleshly and worldly State of the Church that he came in the *Flesh* to do away, and that he abolished in his Death; and thus he is a *Liar*, when he pretends to own that Jesus Christ is come in the *Flesh*. He departs from the Faith of Jesus as the *Christ*, or the anointed Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, which partakes with him in that *Anointing*, and so knows the *Truth*, and is a *Royal Priesthood*; for he sets up his own Testimony, and puts it upon the Church for the Testimony of that great Prophet Jesus Christ. He establishes another Priesthood in the Church, and other Intercessors with God, and exalts human Merit, to the making of the Merit and Intercession of Jesus Christ of none Effect; and he imposes his own Authority upon the Church, for the Authority of the Lord Jesus, and exercises a lordly Dominion

Dominion over GOD's Heritage. Thus he sits in the Temple of GOD, exalting himself, and opposing himself to Christ in the Name of Christ; and so he is a *Liar*, when he pretends to own that Jesus is the Christ. Further, he departs from the Faith and Hope of the *Promise of eternal Life*, through the Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and cleaves to *the Things that are in the World*, in Opposition to the Father and the Son, as manifested in that Promise of eternal Life; He seduces Men from the Belief of this great Truth, That *if any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him*; He departs from the new Commandment of brotherly Love, and from that Order wherein the Children of GOD walked together in that Love from the Beginning, in Separation from the World; and in Place of that *loves the World*, and is a *Friend of the World*. And thus he is a Liar, when he says he knows the Father and Jesus Christ, who was declared to be the Son of GOD with Power, by the Resurrection from the Dead; for he denies the Father, who hath begotten us to the lively Hope of the heavenly Inheritance, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead; and he denies the Son, who gave himself for our Sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil World, according to the Will of GOD and our Father.

In a Word, the Spirit of Antichrist, that would pass for the Spirit of Christ, is known to be against Christ by these Signs. 1. It confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh. 2. It speaketh of the World, and is hearken'd to by worldly Men. 3. It draws Men away from hearing the Apostles of Christ, who preach'd the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven; and it seduces them to give more Ear to the Doctrines and Commandments of Men, than to the Words of the Holy Ghost preach'd by the Apostles, specially concerning the Love of GOD, as manifested in Christ, and our Love to one another according to that.

Ⓔ. All this is still very agreeable to the Doctrine of that Sect, and it looks very like the New Testament; but I should think it hard to prove against any Christian Church, that they hear not the Apostles of Christ. I know you'll readily tell me what you have said before concerning the Interpretation of Scripture, but it will not be easy to convince them, who think they hold the true Interpretation of the Apostles against all Errors and false Glosses, or who hold their

their Religion as received from the Apostles, either by Writing, or by unwritten Tradition, that they are not hearing the Apostles.

X. No less hard than it was to convince the *Jews* that they were not hearing *Moses* and the Prophets; yet the Thing is very clear in many Instances: I shall condescend on a few. The Council of *Constance* confess'd, that Communion in both Kinds was both commanded by Christ, and practis'd by the primitive Church, and yet forbade it. After this the Council of *Basil* made a Decree touching Communion in both Kinds, by which they declared, That Believers who communicate are not oblig'd, by divine Right, to communicate in both Kinds, and that it is the Business of the Church to determine in what Manner the Communion ought to be administer'd. Is not this a strange Way of hearing the Apostles? as if these Apostles had left the Church possessed of a divine Right to contradict the plainest Things they have written! And may not this same Instance serve to fix the Character of *changing the Times and Laws*?

Q. This is barefac'd enough I own; but have you no more Instances?

X. It is as plain in the Words of the Apostles, that the Disciples should assemble on the first Day of the Week to break Bread, as it is that they should assemble for Worship on that Day; yet Churches call'd Christian, who hold themselves indispensibly oblig'd to assemble for Worship on the first Day of the Week, find no such Obligation on them to assemble then to break Bread.

Q. That is to say, they are not hearing the Apostles, even in their assembling to worship on that Day, but are oblig'd to it by some other Authority.

X. I might observe to you further, That the Church of *Rome*, and Protestant Churches too, hold the eating of strangled and Blood as *indifferent*, and as lawful as the eating of any of the Meats forbidden in the Law of *Moses*; tho' the Apostles (in the same Decrees that freed the *Gentiles* from the Yoke of that Law) expressly forbade it, as *necessary* to be abstain'd from, together with the eating of Things sacrificed to Idols, (a Thing that Christ hates) and with Fornication; and yet they have established a Distinction of Meats on their Seasons and Days of Fasting, requiring

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Abstinence

Abstinence from Meats that GOD hath created to be receiv'd with Thanksgiving.

The Apostles gave Commandment about Church Officers, Bishops, or Elders, and Deacons, and, in describing their Character, expressly allow them to be *the Husband of one Wife*; but the Church of *Rome* as expressly forbids them to marry at all.

⊙. You cannot say this of Protestant Churches, who allow them to marry as often as they please, providing they have but one at once.

X. But I have not sufficient Ground to think they are hearing the Apostles in that either; for, when I consider what is said of the ministring Widow, that she is not to be *taken into the Number, under Threescore Years old, having been the Wife of one Man*, and that in Opposition to the younger Widows, who are allow'd to marry again rather than do worse; yea, in Opposition to such as have been oftner than once married, after they professed the Faith, before Threescore Years of Age; I think I have Reason to believe, that the Apostles forbade Church Officers to be married oftner than once: Not that they forbade them to marry in case of Need, to prevent worse, but that they would have them refus'd as Church Officers when so marry'd.

⊙. If I be not misinform'd, these Instances will not touch the *Greek Church*; for it is said, they neither eat Blood, nor allow their Priests to marry twice, though they permit them to marry once.

X. Yet this is far from being enough to clear that Church, or the several Sects of Eastern Christians, of the Charge of not hearing the Apostles: Yea, every Church is liable to this Charge, that is not holding the Gospel just as the first Churches receiv'd it from the Apostles, nor walking in that same Order to which the Apostolick Exhortations (especially concerning brotherly Love, and the Communion of the Saints and Faithful in the Worship of GOD) are all adapted; so that they cannot be observ'd, as given by the Apostles, but in that Order to which they are suited.

It would require a great Excess of Charity to esteem them as Hearers of the Apostles, who contend earnestly for a Church Order, and for Modes and Forms of Church Government and Worship that are not to be seen in the Apostles Writings; and, at the same Time that they are adhering,

adhering obstinately to such Usages, if they be put in Mind of the Neglect of some of the clearest plainest Things that the Apostles have written, will readily answer, That the Things were written only for that Time, and not for the Time we live in ; which is in plain Terms to say, That the Words of the Apostles are to be regarded just as an old Almanack.

Some Traces of the Apostolick Institution must be found in every Church that's call'd Christian ; and supposing these to be held by each Church as its Fundamentals, (for Parties differ as much about this as any Thing whatsoever) it is now become fashionable for Men to excuse themselves, in their Compliance with the Deviations of the Church where their Interest lies, from the primitive Order that appears in the Apostolick Writings, by this, *That they hold the Fundamentals, and so are good Catholick Christians* ; and hereupon they are ready to glory over those who would be tenacious of the Words of the Apostles, without adding or diminishing, as narrow Souls and Bigots, opposite to Catholick Christianity ; yet the Writings of the Apostles are the Catholick Rule of Christianity ; and if so, every Deviation from that must be out of the Catholick Way. But if we are not to hear the Apostles further than what we judge Fundamental and Catholick, how come we to hear any Church or religious Party in any Thing but what's Catholick ? Why do we go along with them in the Practice of these peculiar Things, whereby they stand not only distinguished, but oppos'd to one another ? To be one with all them of every Sect who believe on Christ, through the Word of his Apostles, as far as they appear so to believe, is a glorious Thing, and is the necessary Effect of one's being a Believer himself ; and the most effectual Way of evidencing this, is to hearken to every Word of the Apostles. But these Men must be self-condemn'd, who defend themselves in their Attachment to a Church Order not agreeable to that of the Apostles, or in their Compliance with the un instituted Peculiarities of any Church, by this poor Pretence, That it is enough if they hear the Apostles in Things that are Fundamental and Catholick. If they see not that the Apostles have laid down any Rule for the Order wherein Christians are to walk, in the Profession of the Faith, and Love and Hope that's in Christ, why do they observe any ?

Or,

Or, if the Apostles have given such a Rule, but they are not yet satisfy'd what it is, why do they proceed till they be clear'd? Or, how come they to comply with any Addition to the Words of GOD, or Diminution from them?

The Apostolick or inspired Writers were of GOD; *he that knoweth GOD heareth them; he that is not of GOD heareth not them; hereby know we the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Error, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Antichrist.*

Θ. You carry this Point of hearing the Apostles very far. We have dwelt so long on this, that I see we cannot now overtake the rest of our Subject. As it is not agreeable to our Friend, who has therefore shun'd us for this Time, he'll certainly be perswaded my Head is turn'd, when he finds me still intent upon the unriddling of dark Prophecies.

X. You must therefore study to make him easy, by beginning with something else that will be more agreeable to him; mean Time I, who am exceeding fond to gratify your Curiosity in this Matter, shall consider the rest of the Subject.

DIALOGUE V.

Θ. I Have been thinking on what you said of *Hearing the Apostles*; and, I'm afraid, you have drawn that Cord straiter than did the Apostles themselves, at least as to every Case: For even *Paul*, the most noted Writer among them, tells plainly, That he says some Things from his own Judgment, which he had not from his Master, and speaks but doubtingly of his having the Spirit in some Cases.

X. The Lord told his Apostles, when he was about to leave them, That he had yet many Things to say to them, which they could not then bear, but promised to send them the Spirit of Truth to guide them, as it were Step by Step, into the whole Truth.

The *Corinthians* had proposed Questions to *Paul* touching Marriage; and in Answer to their Questions, he tells them

what

what the Lord had commanded on the Subject in the Days of his Flesh, to which he adds some Things for the clearing of their Difficulties, which the Lord himself had not spoken while he was on the Earth, and which he speaks *as one that had obtained Mercy of the Lord, to be faithful* in the Execution of the Apostolick Office that he had committed to him. And he is not doubting, but asserting that his Judgment was the Judgment of the Spirit of GOD, when he says concerning the Virgin, *She is happier if she so abide, after my Judgment, and I think also that I have the Spirit of GOD.* He would have the *Corinthians* to think, that what he was now saying further than the Lord had said on this Subject while he was with his Disciples, was the Mind of the Spirit of GOD, which he had promised and given to his Apostles, to reveal the whole of the Truth that *began to be spoken by himself.*

But seeing there is a Doctrine and Laws made in the Antichristian Nations, touching *wilful Desertion*, founded on this same Passage, they are certainly inexcusable, in not hearing the Apostles as to every other Thing they say.

Ø. Yet *Paul* forbids the *Thessalonians* to trouble themselves, by hearkening to what he had said in his first Epistle, concerning the Nearness of the Day of Judgment: For, it is manifest he was mistaken in his Judgment, which he had plainly enough declared, that the coming of the LORD would be in his Life-time.

X. This is that Passage to which *Peter* especially refers, when warning Christians against the *Scorners* that should come in the last Days, saying, *Where is the Promise of his Coming?* For he signifies, that *Paul*, speaking on the Subject of Christ's Coming, in his Epistles, says some Things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, or untaught of GOD, and unconfirmed in the true Knowledge of the Scriptures, wrest, as also the other Scriptures, unto their own Destruction. Thus *Peter* sets *Paul's* Epistles on the same Footing to us, with the rest of the Scriptures that were given by Inspiration, and foretels the Use that was making, and would be made of what *Paul* had said, according to the Wisdom given unto him, concerning the Promise of the LORD's Coming, and Day of Judgment, which he says would be wrested, even as the other Scriptures, by the unlearned and unstable. And so, when I see this, or any other difficult Passage of Scripture

Scripture wrested, or turned against the Scope of the Scripture, and improved against the Authority of the Scripture, and the Truth of the Promise of Christ's Coming, I am so far from being shaken with this, that I am rather confirmed by it, as I find the Scripture therein verified. As *Peter* holds it of equal Authority with the rest of the Scripture, though hard to be understood, so *Paul* himself does not retract any Thing he had writ in his first Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, concerning the Coming of the LORD, nor signify any Change of his Mind, as to what he had said on that Matter; but he guards the *Thessalonians* against the Abuse of it, and corrects their Mistake, by telling them what they had heard from his Mouth while he was with them, concerning the Man of Sin, who behoved to be revealed in his Time, and then consumed by the Spirit of the LORD's Mouth, before the LORD's Coming, by the Brightness of which he was to be destroyed.

A. You would have *Peter* to be in better Terms with *Paul* than *James* is: For, after all that has been said to reconcile them on the grand Article of Justification, they still differ, just as a *Legalist* and an *Antinomian*: Yea, these two Authors have laid the Foundation of an everlasting Division among Christians. *Luther*, that bold Fellow, once rejected the Epistle of *James*, in his great Zeal for *Paul*'s Side of the Question, till plain Necessity, in disputing with more rigid *Antinomians* than himself, obliged him to take it up again, reconciling it the best Way he could to his beloved *Paul*'s Doctrine. On the other Hand, *James*'s Followers, when they have done their utmost in torturing *Paul*'s Writings touching Predestination and Justification, into an Agreement with *James*, fly to this, as their last Refuge, That *Peter* says, *There are something in Paul's Epistles hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest to their own Destruction.* But you give this another Turn. I dare say you are a *Paulite*.

X. And no less a *Jacobite*: For, I reckon it the great Fault of the *Legalists* and *Antinomians* both, that they do not give an equal Ear to *Paul* and to *James*, and hear them both, as they stand in a beautiful Agreement together.

A. And pray how would you reconcile them on the Article of Justification?

X I think they need no Reconciliation : For, if Justice be done to their Words, according to plain Scripture Style, they were never at any such Variance, as is among Christians, about Justification.

To justify, in the Scripture Style, is either to make one just who was before unjust, as to *justify the Ungodly*, or to declare one just who is so already, and manifest him to be just, as when GOD is said to be *justified*.

Paul shews us, That we Sinners are *made just* by Faith, as it respects the Blood and Righteousness of Jesus Christ, the Son of GOD, who was delivered for the Offences, and raised again for the Justification of a Multitude of all Nations, without Difference ; and that we are thus *made just*, freely by the Grace of GOD, that gave Christ to be the Propitiation for the Manifestation of the divine Justice in intitling us to the Acceptance, and to eternal Life, who were ungodly ; and this, without any Respect to any Work done by us, to make us just. And so he affirms, *That a Man is justified by Faith, without the Deeds or Works of the Law ;* and says, *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the Ungodly, his Faith is counted for Righteousness.*

Now, whereas some inferred from this Doctrine, as the *Antinomians* do still, that we are declared just, and assured of our Justification, by Faith, respecting its Object, without the good Works that are the proper Fruits of that Faith, *James* shews us, that we are *declared just* by Faith, as it produces good Works, without which it can never declare us just, being alone.

Paul never said that our Believing declared us just, without good Works, which he always places as the necessary Fruits and Evidences of our being *made just* by the Faith of Christ.

And *James* never said, that the good Works which are the Fruits of true Faith, or that Faith working in us to produce these Works, makes us Sinners to be just in the Sight of GOD : For, his Words behaved to be tortur'd ere they could be applied to any Thing else but the Declaration of our being just. He plainly speaks of this, when he says, *What Profit, my Brethren, though a Man say he hath Faith, and have not Works ? Can Faith save him ? Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead, being alone ; yea, a Man may say, thou hast Faith, and I have Works, shew me thy Faith without thy Works, and I will shew thee my Faith by my Works.* And he can be under-

understood to mean nothing else by *Justification*, but the Declaration of our being righteous, when he says, *Was not Abraham our Father justified by Works, when he had offered Isaac his Son upon the Altar? Seest thou how Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works was Faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed GOD, and it was imputed unto him for Righteousness, and he was called the Friend of GOD. Ye see then how that by Works a Man is justified, and not by Faith only.* We see, by the plain Scripture Testimony, that *Abraham* was made just by Faith, long before *Isaac* was born; when it was said, *He believed GOD, and it was imputed unto him for Righteousness.* And we see, that after he was just by Faith, his Faith wrought with his Works, when he obeyed GOD, in offering his Son *Isaac* upon the Altar, whereby his Faith appeared to be true and unfeigned; and when he had done that, his Faith received a notable Confirmation, by the Oath of GOD, and he was solemnly declared to be just, by the Works wherewith his Faith had wrought; as it was said unto him, *By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this Thing, and hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son, that in Blessing I will bless thee.* Thus his Title to Blessedness was made most sure to him, and his Right to it fully declared by the Works wherewith his Faith wrought; and thus the Scripture was verified, and manifested to be true, which had said, before his Faith wrought that Work, *Abraham believed GOD, and it was imputed unto him for Righteousness.* And thus we see, from the Instance of *Abraham*, how that a Man, who is made just by Faith without Works, is, by Works, declared to be just, and not by Faith only; which is the Sum of the Doctrine of *Paul* and of *James*, concerning Justification.

Paul, the supposed Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, (where he carries the Point of Acceptance with GOD, through the Sacrifice of Christ alone, as high as he does any where) sets this same Case of the Confirmation of *Abraham's* Faith, by the divine Oath, before the *Hebrews*, as an Argument to enforce his Exhortation to them, to shew Diligence in the Work of Faith, and Labour of Love shewed toward the LORD's Name, in ministring to the Saints, to the full Assurance of Hope, unto the End. And therefore, though there were Men from the Beginning that wrested the Doctrine of *Paul* and of *James*, to make Division among

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Christians, yet they are really as much at one in their Writings, as they were in Conversation when *James* gave *Paul* the Right-hand of Fellowship, upon hearing that Gospel which he preached among the *Gentiles*, and when *Paul* was as forward as he on the pressing of good Works. And thus it may be manifest to any impartial Reader of *Paul* and *James*, that *James* was not a *Legalist*, nor *Paul* an *Antinomian*.

Q. Well done, by the Help of a plain Distinction, manifestly founded in the Scripture Style ! And this is not wrong Christian Theory : But, do your People pursue this to Practice ? Do they give an equal Ear to *Paul* and to *James* ?

X. I can say they do it, so far as to be reckoned *Antinomians* by the *Legalists*, and esteemed *Legalists* by the *Antinomians*.

Q. Then, I dare say, they are hearing the Apostles : And to let me part fair with this that has kept us so long. *The Antichristian World hears not the Apostles. The Man of Sin comes now to be considered with his Consumption.*

A. I thought you had got enough of these Mysteries at our last Meeting.

Q. We only left this : And if you'll have a little Patience, you may see us soon at an End with it.

A. I confess I admire your Patience. You have got into Temper I never saw you in before.

Q. You knew me always curious and inquisitive, as well as simple and free. And there is something gratifying to Curiosity, even in this Subject.

A. What's your Opinion then of the famous Science of *Astrology* ? Or, did you ever study the Prophecies of *Thomas the Rhymer* ?

Q. These Things cannot be ridiculed, nor can the Justness of the Ridicule be perceived, without some Notion of the Nature of them. But I have thought more of the Knowledge of future Events, by that which is called *the Second Sight*, that seems to be a Thing pretty well attested. Such Knowledge of future Events affords an obvious Argument for a Providence. And I do not know but the certain Knowledge of such Events may be communicate in the hieroglyphical Way, if we be furnished with the Key, as well as the Knowledge of present or past Things. Bear

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with me then a little, till I see if the Scripture gives any Key to the understanding of its *Hieroglyphicks*.

Mean Time, I shall confess to you one Thing, That I begin to be weary of the metaphysical or mathematical Way of knowing moral Subjects. And indeed I am not sure but I who have all my Ideas by Sensation and Reflection, may have juster, and much more practical Notions of divine and moral Subjects, conveyed to me in the emblematical Way, than by all abstract Reasoning.

A. You'll allow me then to congratulate you upon your commencing Mythologist, and to wish you Success in the Study of the prophetical Figures.

O. You should rather compliment me upon my being happily delivered from a Way wherein I have not found myself made wiser by the Knowledge of any one Thing, nor bettered, but tossed to and fro, as an airy Bubble, ready to burst with the Pride of Knowledge.

X. As there is an Argument for the Truth of Christianity that's drawn from the Prophecies, I do not see how a Man can well pretend to answer it, without making any Enquiry into these

O. Let me then, without more to do, enquire concerning the *Man of Sin*. Must he be a single Man, as some would have it, or a Succession of single Men, like the *Pope of Rome*?

X. However great the *Pope's* Part is in that *Falling away*, which is perfected in the *Man of Sin*, as being at the Head of that same Church that has certainly led the Van in that Apostacy, yet, when we consider the *Man of Sin*, as opposed to the true Church that's often represented in the New Testament by the Figure of a *Man*, we must take it to signify a Body of Men, an apostate Church, opposed to the true Church by the Epithet of *Sin*.

Thus the *Mystery of Iniquity* is opposed to the *Mystery of Godliness*: For, as in the true Church, whereof Christ is the Head, the Mystery, or hidden Sense of the Figures and Types of the Old Testament, is laid open, so is the false Church, the Mystery of many Old Testament Figures, as the apostate ten Tribes, *Sodom* and *Egypt*, *Babylon*, *Tyre*, *Antiochus*, *Euphrates*, and the like.

O. But, is the Notion of a *Man*, as representing the Church, taken from the Old Testament? Or, was the Church of

of which Christ is Head, pointed at by this Figure, any where in the old Prophecies?

X. The most notable Hieroglyphick of the Old Testament, was the *Cherubim*, which appeared to *Adam* after he was cast out of *Paradise*, was drawn on the Curtains of the Tabernacle, and on the Walls of the Temple round about, and set on each Side of the Propitiation, or Mercy-Seat, in the most holy Place, and about the Time of the Destruction of the first Temple, represented to *Ezekiel* in a Vision, and preserved to us in the Book of his Prophecy, where this Hieroglyphick is very particularly described. Now, the first Thing that offers in the Description of the *Cherubim*, is this, *And this was their Appearance*, says the Prophet, *They had the Likeness of a Man*. And this *Likeness of a Man* had the Face of a Man, and some other hieroglyphical Figures joined to it.

The New Testament refers to this, when it speaks of the Church as a Man, and the Body of a Man: For, though the *Cherubim* have been taken for Angels, the Book of the *Revelation*, referring to *Ezekiel's Cherubim*, and *Isaiah's Seraphim*, expressly distinguishes them from the Angels, and makes the *Cherub* say these Words to the Lamb, *Thou hast redeemed us to GOD, by thy Blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue; and People, and Nation*.

Q. Have you seen *Hutchinson's Books*, particularly that which bears the Title of *Glory and Gravity*?

X. Yes, and have been delighted with his Explication of the Faces of the Ox, the Lion and the Eagle, which he makes the Hieroglyphicks of Fire, Light and Air, or Wind, which appeared also with the *Cherubim*, as the Emblems of the divine Three. The Face of a Man, joined to the Face of a Lion on the *Cherub*, might be put for the Man Christ Jesus, as Head of his Body the Church. But it seems to me very improper to make the *Cherub* itself, as it had the *Appearance of a Man*, to be the Hieroglyphick of a Man: Nor does it answer to the Key that I have said the Book of the *Revelation* gives us for opening it, even in that same Passage which confirms Mr. *Hutchinson's* Notion of the Faces to me, by applying the Figure of the Lion to the Son of GOD.

Daniel also saw the *Appearance of the Likeness of the Glory of the LORD*, with the *Wheels*, in that Vision which we have in the 7th Chapter of his Book, where he that sits on the

Throne is call'd, *The Ancient of Days*, and *the Hair of his Head* is said to be *like the pure Wool*, which is applied, in the first Chapter of the *Revelation*, unto Christ, who seems to be represented in *Daniel*, as he will appear at the Judgment and Destruction of the Beast with ten Horns, *in the Glory of the Father, with the holy Angels*. Before this *Ancient of Days*, the *Likeness of the Son of Man* is brought by the ministering Angels, and there is given him *Dominion, and Glory, and a Kingdom*. And in the Explication of the Vision, this Likeness of the Son of Man, whom they brought near before the Ancient of Days, and to whom Dominion was given, is expressly declared to be *the People of the Saints of the most high Ones*.

The Church therefore, as it stands united with the divine Three, in Christ Jesus its Head, is the Thing pointed at in the *Cherubim*, rather than the human Nature of the Son of GOD: For the Church, whereof he is Head, being made *one new Man in himself*, is *one Body*, all animated by his Spirit, according to his Prayer to the Father, *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one*.

The whole Church, with which the Son of GOD took Part in Flesh and Blood to sanctify them, and deliver them from Death, by destroying him that had the Power of it, is the *Seed of the Woman*, opposed to the *Seed of the Serpent*, in the first Revelation made to *Adam*: And after he heard of this, he had this Seed of the Woman very fitly represented to him in the *Cherubim*, as contending; for *Cherub* is from *כרוב*, like unto, and *נלל*, to contend.

And thus far I have presumed to correct the ingenious Mr. *Hutchinson*, leaving you to judge.

○ I now want to know if there be any such Representation of the *Man of Sin* in the Old Testament.

X. There is a manifest Reference in the Book of the *Revelation* to the Merchandize of *Tyre*, as it is described in *Ezekiel*: And now hear what *Ezekiel* says of the King of *Tyre*, *Thou seolest up the Sun full of Wisdom, and perfect in Beauty; thou hast been in Eden, the Garden of GOD, every precious Stone thy Covering: --- Thou art the anointed Cherub that covereth, and I have set thee; thou wast upon the holy Mountain of GOD, thou hast walked up and down in the Midst of the Stones of Fire. Thou wast perfect in thy Ways, from the Day that thou wast created, till Iniquity was found in thee. By the Multitude of thy Merchandize they have filled the Midst of thee with Violence, and*

Thou hast sinned: Therefore, I will cast thee, as profane, out of the Mountain of GOD; and I will destroy thee, O covering Cherub, from the Midst of the Stones of Fire. Thine Heart was lifted up because of thy Beauty, thou hast corrupted thy Wisdom by Reason of thy Brighness; I will cast thee to the Ground, I will lay thee before Kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy Sanctuaries, by the Multitude of thine Iniquities, by the Iniquity of thy Traffick; therefore will I bring forth a Fire from the Midst of thee; it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to Ashes upon the Earth, in the Sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the People shall be astonished at thee: Thou shalt be a Terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

Q. As the King of Tyre was never plac'd at Eden, nor set a Cherub in the Mountain of GOD, nor perfect in his first Rise, there must be something else pointed at thro' him, to which these Things may be more fitly apply'd. And, if the Cherub be the Church, this is certainly the Figure of a corrupted Church, that has fallen away from its original Constitution, and primitive Purity, and is corrupted by Pride and Traffick with the Kings of the Earth, like that of Tyre. And this leads me to think again of Church Authority supported with secular Power. Ezekiel seems to speak of the consuming and destroying of this corrupted Cherub, this Man of Iniquity.

X. Paul's Words, when he says, The Lord shall consume the Man of Sin, and destroy him, are taken from the 7th Chapter of Daniel, where it is said concerning the Beast with ten Horns, The Judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his Dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the End.

And now hear how he is consumed.

His Constitution was sound, till the Lord, in his wonderful Providence, brought the Scriptures again to Light in the Languages of the Nations where Church Authority was supported with secular Power, and that in spite of all the Endeavours of the Roman Church to the contrary. The Lord's Word is the Spirit of his Mouth. From the Time when this began to blow upon the Man of Sin, he began to languish; and the first Degree of his Consumption was, when some of the Powers of Europe, minding their own Interests, stood up in Defence of the Publication of the Scriptures against the Church of Rome, and when these Kings, who had given their Power and Strength to the Beast to make

make Uniformity, began to break that Uniformity. Thus the Man of Sin first felt Pain, and his Health began to fail.

⊙. For it seems his Health lay in the concurring Power and Strength of those Kings; and this could not but be a very great Affliction to them that *had the Mark of the Beast, and worshipped his Image*. But what next?

X. In Consequence of this, Strife and Discord took Place throughout the Antichristian Body, to the great Disturbance of its Communion. There came to be three stated Communions in the Lord's Supper, the old Popish, the *Lutheran*, and the *Zuinglian* or *Calvinist*; and these so stated, that all Attempts to reconcile any one of them with another, or to live in Communion with them all, have been, and probably will be to the End, to no Purpose.

⊙. This was indeed a great Schism in the Body, a very Stoppage of the Circulation, a deadly Blow to the Catholick Communion; but still, in all these different Communions, Church Authority stands supported with secular Power.

X. So it will be, in some Degree, till the very End, though, in due Time, that Part will be affected also before the End. Mean Time, in the next Place, particular Nations and Kingdoms were divided within themselves, as to their proper Form of Worship and Church Government, as well as of Doctrine. This has been the Cause of Civil Wars and much Bloodshed, as a just Judgment from GOD, on the Antichristian Nations, for their Persecutions; and of this *Britain* has had its large Share, where the Spirit of Contention, about what should be the prevailing Form of National Religion, remains to this Day. In *Scotland*, there are no less than three great Pretenders to it, beside the Church as it is presently established, the Papists, the Episcopalians, and the *Cameronians*, or Covenanters, and these are also sub-divided.

⊙. Here is a *Fire brought forth from the Midst of him to devour him*. And what has been the Consequence of this? For one would think, this breaking of the Clergy into so many Factions, should weaken their Authority and Influence on the Minds of Men.

X. While the Heat of this Contention lasted, and the Disputes were warm, Church Policy and Church Authority

grew

grew to such a Height among the contending Parties, as was not easy to bear. When Dominion circulated from Hand to Hand, it became more intense, and exerted itself with the greater Vehemence that it was oppos'd by those who were hoping to reign in their Turn. The Leaders of each religious Party thought of nothing but Power, and the People devoted to their proper Leaders, paid a religious Obedience to them, and breath'd out Threatnings and Slaughter against all that would not feign Subjection to their Authority. The Authority of the Clergy in general, was suppos'd as a Thing unquestionable by any but Atheists; the Question was only, in whose Hands it should be lodg'd. This was remarkable in the last Age; but it serv'd, in the Issue, to make Men weary of Church Authority, and let them see how little true Religion there is in Subjection to it; and the Consequence of this is the heaviest Stroke that has yet fallen on the Kingdom of Antichrist.

Q. And what is that?

X. The World seems now to be taking a more remarkable Turn toward Infidelity, than ever it did since the Beginning of Antichrist's Reign, and persecuting Principles are wearing out of Fashion; and, at the same Time, the Nature of Christ's Kingdom, as it is not of this World, is brought to Light by the Scriptures, in Opposition to the Jewish Sense of the Prophecies, and to Church Authority supported with secular Power. These Things serve to sap the Foundation of the Dominion of the Clergy; and for this Reason they are very much afflicted with them, and every where raging, for that they cannot now exert the Power that some Time a-Day they exercised in the World. And upon this I would say, That GOD, in his righteous Judgment, is *filling their Kingdom with Darknes, and they gnaw their Tongues for Pain, and repent not of their Deeds*; and, in their Zeal for a worldly Kingdom to Christ, *i. e.* to themselves, they reproach the Kingdom that's not of this World, the Kingdom of Heaven, and therefore the GOD of that Kingdom. This is the more remarkable, that it has happen'd at the Time which the Scripture Prophecies point at, as fatal to the Kingdom of the Beast with the ten Horns.

A. You have been amusing yourselves with spying Figures in the Clouds; and now, I suppose, you are to set

set about the Work of fixing and settling the Prophetic Times.

©. Nor will that be an ill Amusement when we have Leisure for it; at least, our Time may be as well spent on this, as on building Castles in the Air, with the Philosophers, who raise fine Structures on their unprov'd Suppositions; and I dare say, we may come to a Point about the Times, before they settle a just Notion of Gravity, or fix the Longitude. Mean Time, I shall think on what has been said.

X. And I shall think on the Times.

DIALOGUE VI.

©. I Have been thinking on the Affliction of the Clergy, through the Darkness that fills their Kingdom by the Increase of Knowledge; and I'm perswaded, they would be much more afflicted, if no Body profess'd Christianity but they who believe the Scripture Testimony, and follow their Teachers not a Step further than they follow the Scriptures. But you say, this is not to be look'd for in this World; and as you signify'd, that the present Distress is the more remarkable, that it has happen'd at the Time which the Prophets have set for Evil to the Kingdom of the Beast, I am fond to understand how you make this appear.

X. The End of *Daniel's Time, Times and an Half*, must bring Evil upon the Kingdom of the Beast, of whom it is said, *He shall wear out the Saints of the most high ones, and think to change Times and Laws, and they shall be given into his Hand, until a Time and Times, and the dividing of Time: But the Judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his Dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the End.*

The Revelation makes this Time, Times and an Half, (the Time of the Reign of the Beast with ten Horns) to be 42 Months, that is, three Years and an Half. And again, it makes this 42 Months to be 1260 Days, that is, by reckoning 30 Days in each Month, and 360 Days precisely in each Year.

If these 42 Months be reckoned as *Daniel's Weeks* are, each Day for a Year, after the Manner of the Prophets, then the Time, Times and an Half, or 42 Months, are 1260 Years. This is the Time of the Beast's Reign, and when this Time is run, Providence must be at Work to take away his Dominion, to consume it.

A. But I suppose, there may be as great Difficulties about fixing the Beginning of these 42 Months, as about the 70 Weeks.

X. Ignorance and Inattention, or Prejudice, may move Difficulties and Disputes on Subjects that are capable of Demonstration; and when Men indulge their own Fancy on such a Subject as this, there must be different Opinions about it; but the Book of the *Revelation* has not left us at an Uncertainty about the Beginning of the Reign of the Beast with ten Horns: For it represents the *Roman State*, with its capital City set on seven Mountains, having seven different Forms of supreme Power and Government, five of which were fallen when *John* wrote, (*viz.* Kings, Consuls, Decemvirs, Tribunes of the Soldiers, and Dictators) one was at the Time of his Writing, (*viz.* the Heathen Emperors) the other was not yet come, (*i. e.* the Christian Emperors) and when he comes he must continue a short Space, (*i. e.* in Comparison with the foregoing sixth Head; for he came not up till the fourth Century, and fell at furthest in the Year 476, when *Augustulus* was depos'd by *Odoacer*) and the Beast with ten Horns succeeds, in whom the *Roman Empire*, that was and now is not, being wounded to Death in its seventh Head, and dispersed into ten Kingdoms, yet remains united as in an eighth Head. Of this the Book of the *Revelation* speaks expressly thus, *And I saw one of his Heads as it were wounded to Death, and his deadly Wound was healed, and all the World wondered after the Beast.--- And Power was given unto him to continue Forty two Months.* And again, *The ten Horns which thou sawest, are ten Kings, which have received no Kingdom as yet, but receive Power, as Kings, one Hour with the Beast.* This most plainly fixes the Beginning of the Reign of the Beast with ten Horns, who makes War 42 Months, at that same very Time when ten Kings receiv'd Power in the broken Empire. And this was so clear and evident long before the Event happened, that *Tertullian*, who wrote about the End of the second Centu-

ry, or the very Beginning of the Third, tells us expressly, from the Prophecies of the New Testament, *That the Dispersion of the Roman State into ten Kings should bring on Antichrist.* Now, supposing there were any Doubt if *Daniel's* fourth Kingdom be the *Roman*, the *Revelation* points it out so exactly, and with such particular Circumstances added to *Daniel's* Description, that it is impossible to apply the Description, in all its Parts, to any Thing else; and the Figures hit with a marvellous Exactness. And seeing the Beginning of the Reign of the Beast with ten Horns, whose Time is 42 Months, is fix'd by such a remarkable Event, as the breaking of that Empire into ten Kingdoms, it is impossible that we can be very far mistaken in computing these 42 Months from that great Event.

©. If that be the Beginning of the Time, Times and an Half, it could not be after the deposing of *Augustulus*, nor very long before; and then you'll say, we are now at the End of the Time, Times and an Half: For 1260, added to 476, make 1736. I could imagine, that the Time mention'd by itself, or the first 360 Years, makes a first Period, from the Beginning of this monstrous Reign, till it came to its Height and full Power in the ninth Century; and the Times put together, or the next 720 Years, make the next Period, when he reign'd in full Power till the sixteenth Century, when the Reformation happen'd; and the dividing of Time, or the 180 Years, makes a third Period from thence to this Time. But did not the Kingdom of the Clergy begin to be in the present Distress before the Year 1736?

X. You must notice, That 1260 Years, of 365 Days, and one Day more each fourth Year, are full 18 Years longer than 1260 Years of the prophetick Sort, which have but 360 Days precisely, and so the Time, Times and an Half, may have been at an End 18 Years before the Year 1736; and thus it answers as well to the Event.

And it is very remarkable, that the 2300 Days, which are mention'd in that Vision of *Daniel*, where the Account of these Days is *shut up*, because it is *for many Days*, if they be numbred each Day for a Year, from the Time when *Daniel* had that Vision, then the End of them falls about the End of the Time, Times and an Half, as they have been numbred from the Time of the breaking of the Empire.

©. But

Q. But must not the Beast with ten Horns be destroy'd at the End of the Time, Times, and the dividing of Time?

X. No: For *Daniel* places the End at which the Beast is to be wholly destroy'd, at some Distance from the End of the Time, Times and an Half. He says, *From the Time the Daily shall be taken away, and the Abomination that maketh desolate set up, 1290 Days.* This is 30 Days more than the Time, Times and an Half. And then it is said, *Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the 1335 Days; but go thou thy way till the End, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy Lot at the End of the Days.* This is that End at which the Beast will be destroy'd, and the Kingdom be given to the Saints; and it is 45 Days more than the 1290 Days, i. e. 75 Days added to the Time, Times and an Half.

Q. The *Revelation* meddles not with any of these Numbers, except the Time, Times and an Half; but you'll say, That by unfolding that, it lays open the whole.

X. And thus you may see that the *Revelation*, which is commonly esteem'd full as dark as *Daniel*, or any Prophecy of the Old Testament, may well be call'd a *Revelation*, as it lays open the seal'd Visions of *Daniel*.

Q. But if Antichrist was come, and Church Authority supported with secular Power, long before the breaking of the Empire, may we not suspect some Mistake in the fixing of the Beginning of the Time, Times and an Half, by that Event? especially seeing the *Revelation* seems to place the End of the 42 Months, or 1260 Days, long before the filling of the Beast's Kingdom with Darknes.

X. You have hit upon the only considerable Difficulty in this whole Matter; but the Book of the *Revelation* itself sufficiently clears it: For, in that Vision, where the whole Opposition of Satan to the Church, by the Power of the Empire, from first to last, is represented, with a plain Reference to the old Prophecy concerning the *Enmity betwixt the Serpent and the Woman*, we are directed to a twofold Reckoning of this same Number. There is a twofold Flight of the Woman into the Wilderness, there mentioned, perhaps with a Reference to *Elijah's* flying twice, and being fed in an extraordinary Manner. The first Flight is plac'd just after the Seed of the Woman is brought forth, and before the Fall of Heathenism in the Empire, which is represented

by the Dragon's being *cast down from Heaven unto the Earth*; and there must be 1260 Days number'd from the Time of this first Flight. This 1260 Days is the same with the 42 Months of the treading of the holy City under Foot of the Gentiles, or the 1260 Days of the Witnesses prophesying in Sackcloth, who have Power to shut Heaven that it rain not in the Days of their Prophecy; even as *Elijah* had Power to shut Heaven that it rain'd not on the Earth by the Space of three Years and six Months, at the Time of his first Flying. These 1260 Days are finish'd under the sixth Trumpet, and before the blowing of the Seventh, and therefore long before the filling of the Beast's Kingdom with Darkness, which comes not till the fifth Vial under the seventh Trumpet: So that these 1260 Days must have been begun long before the Beginning of the Reign of *Daniel's* Beast with the ten Horns; and they must be reckon'd from the Time of the first Flight of the Woman into the Wilderness.

The second Flight of the Woman into the Wilderness, *where she is nourished for a Time, and Times, and Half a Time, from the Face of the Serpent*, is plac'd after the Fall of Heathenism in the Empire; and it answers to the Time of the healing of the Beast's deadly Wound, from which there was Power given to him to continue 42 Months. This last is the Time, and Times and an Half of the Beast's Reign, spoken of by *Daniel*, who mentions not the First, no more than he does the seven Heads of the Beast; but the *Revelation* adds the first Reckoning of this self-same Number, even as it adds the seven Heads to *Daniel's* Description of the Beast with ten Horns, to open the Vision, and make the Application of it to the Events more plain.

Q. And when should that first Reckoning begin?

X. Toward the End of the second Century, when Tradition came to be establish'd as the Rule of Faith together with the Scriptures; when the Authority of Synods and Councils was brought in upon the Churches, and began first to be exerted in the Controversy about *Easter*, and when the Philosophy of the Gentiles was admitted to illustrate the Christian Doctrine; by Means of which the Son of GOD, the *λογος*, came to be talk'd of in the *Platonick* Manner, and the Power of Nature, and human Merit was magnify'd. About this Time the Gentiles, coming in to the Christian Profession, without being sufficiently purg'd from the Super-

Superstitions of their Education, brought in with them their native Superstition, under the Christian Name; and from this Time the Professors of Christianity began to be look'd on as a rising Party or Faction that meant to make a Figure in this World. By these Means Christianity was corrupted, and the Professors of it grew to a considerable Party in the Empire, till the Beginning of the fourth Century, well prepar'd to receive the Support of the secular Power from the Hand of *Constantine*, especially when the most faithful were taken away from among them, by the severe and long Persecution of *Dioclesian*. It was toward the End of the second Century that Christians began to *leave their first Love*, and the Christian Leaders to corrupt Christianity by Merchandice, making a Gain of it; dispensing it by the Measure of Philosophy and Tradition, and the Authority of Synods and Councils; and then was the first Flight of the Woman into the Wilderness; then the Witnesses began to prophesy in Sackcloth, and the outer Court of GOD's House was given unto the *Gentiles*, who did from thence tread the holy City under Foot 42 Months: So that the outer Court, or outward Profession of Christianity, could no more be any where measured by the Word of GOD, the only Rule for measuring his House, till the End of these Months.

Q. But, does the *Revelation* point to this Beginning of that 42 Months, any otherways than by placing it after the Erection of the Christian Church, and before the Fall of Heathenism in the Empire?

X. It places the End of this 42 Months, or 1260 Days, about the End of the Events that belong to the sixth Trumpet, and, as I said, before the blowing of the seventh Trumpet; and therefore, before the pouring out of the Vials: For, we must hold the seven Vials under the seventh Trumpet, even as the seven Trumpets are under the seventh Seal, if we would not break the Thread that serves to lead us through the Book of the *Revelation*. Now, it points to a great Event at the End of the Time of the Witnesses prophesying in Sack-cloth, whereby we may be directed to the Beginning of it: For, when they are killed by the Beast, at the End of their Testimony in Sack-cloth, and are alive again after three Days and an Half, it is said, *They ascended up to Heaven in a Cloud, and their Enemies beheld them; and the same*
Hour

How was there a great Earthquake, and the tenth Part of the City fell. If this Fall of the tenth Part of the City be the Fall of the Greek Church and Kingdom, which, from the Time of the breaking of the Empire, was no more the City, but a tenth Part of it, and which fell by the Hand of the *Turks*, the great Event of the sixth Trumpet, in the Year 1453: Then, if we count 1260 Years backward from thence, the Beginning of them will be near the End of the second Century.

⊙. As this Fall of the tenth Part of the City is said to be at the Time of the Exaltation of the Witnesses, after their Resurrection, what Event happened, not long before that, like the killing of the Witnesses?

X. If these two Witnesses be the Old Testament and the New, there was a famous Contention with the Church about their Testimony, carried on by War and much Bloodshed in *Bohemia*, from the Time of the Council of *Constance*, till it issued in the Reconciliation of the contending Parties, upon the Extermination of the *Taborites*, who obstinately maintain'd the Testimony of the Witnesses against the Church, and in that notable Decree of the Council of *Basil*, about Communion in both Kinds, whereby these Witnesses were plainly sacrific'd to the Authority of the Church, subdued under it, and their Testimony render'd utterly of none Effect to the People of the Nations. This was in the Year 1437.

⊙. And what shall be the Event for their Resurrection and Exaltation?

X. The Revival of the ancient Scripture Profession of Christianity, in the Brethren of *Bohemia*, who being animated by the Spirit of the Scriptures, wholly separated themselves from the *Papists* and from the *Calixtines*, now join'd to them, and having choos'd Ministers of the Church of their own Company, without Regard to human Learning, or any other Teaching, but what the Spirit of GOD gave them by a Translation of the Scriptures, they set up Congregations of their own, which, in Midst of various Persecutions and manifold Afflictions, were preserved in *Moravia*, *Bohemia*, *Poland*, and other Places, till the Reformation from *Papery* came to take Place in the several Protestant Nations. Thus the Witnesses appeared alive again, and exalted above Philosophy, Tradition, and all Dependence upon the Authority of the Church, or of Synods and Councils, which was no
where

where the Case, for about 1260 Years before this notable Event happened.

Q. Were not these bold Fellows, who separated from the Church at that Time of Day, the *Waldenses*?

X. The *Waldenses* had been long before this notable Separation of the Brethren of *Bohemia*. They differed from the *Waldenses*, and found Fault with them on two Points, pretty remarkable, in a Letter to them of *Austria*, A. D. 1467.

1. They were much offended with them for dissembling their Principles at any Time, and attending the Worship of the *Roman Church*, which they themselves condemned in their Hearts; thus basely profaning and polluting themselves, and not confessing with their Mouth as they believed in their Heart. 2. They condemned the *Waldenses* for the Care in heaping up Gold and Silver that they observed about them, though the End of it was to help them in Time of Persecution: For they judged it inconsistent with laying up our Treasure in Heaven, and with thinking that the Evil of the present Day is sufficient to it; and they reckoned, according to our LORD's Saying, *Where your Treasure is, there will your Heart be also*, that in the End, they would principally rely on that which they had spared and laid up for themselves on the Earth. *Luther* says of the Brethren of *Bohemia*, "That they were pinch'd by Poverty, which they relieved by the Labour of their Hands." And indeed it was no small Evidence of the Power of the Gospel upon them, that it reconciled them to Poverty, and taught them to bear their Cross patiently, without ever thinking of defending their Religion by the Sword, as did the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses*.

Q. I dare say, this is as like the Spirit that breathes in the New Testament, as any Thing that could be seen among Christians, since the Time when Christianity began to be corrupted. And certainly it was no less proper for the Scripture Prophecy to take Notice of this, than of many other Events to which Interpreters have applied it. This was indeed a remarkable Event relating to Christianity and the Scriptures, after the Corruption of that Religion had come to its Height, and the Authority of the Church had triumphed over the Scriptures. And so you make this the End of the first Reckoning of the 1260 Days, or 42 Months.

But you hold the Time we now live in, as the End of the 42 Months applied to the Beast with ten Horns, or of *Daniel's*

niel's

niel's Time, Times and an Half. And indeed I must own this is a Time of Darkness to the Kingdom of the Clergy. I am not surpris'd to find them apprehensive of the Danger of their Church, by that polite Christianity which comes a-pace in the Room of the superstitious Christianity which has been so long beneficial to them. And indeed, if it go on and gain Ground as fast as it has been doing for some Time past, even among those who are Gainers by the national Religion, nothing can tend more to the Ruin of their Kingdom; especially if it shall appear, at the same Time, that true Christianity is the Reverse of a national Religion.

A. Thus you have fixt the prophetick Times! And now, if the true Profession of Christianity remain only with such a People as these who are pretending to it, in Opposition to the national Religion, I must say it is at a far lower Pass than is the Kingdom of Antichrist. It is said, that Christianity, in its first and lowest Condition, was supported by Signs and Wonders that rais'd Attention, and awed the Multitude; and when these fail'd, it would certainly have sunk, if it had not got the Support of the secular Power. But, as the World is not now to be impos'd on with Signs and Miracles, nothing of this Kind can be pretended to. And how then can any Profession of the primitive Christianity stand or subsist long against national Christianity?

X. There were *Epecureans* as well as *Saducees* in the World, when the Testimony concerning Christ's Resurrection came first Abroad in it, attended with Signs and Wonders, and with diverse Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, and these were as witty satyrical Fellows, and laugh'd as much at every Thing above their Reach, as our *Atheists* or *Deists* do now. These Men who have the Front to resist the Truth of the Resurrection, considering how it is attested, would have treat it in the same Manner, if it had happen'd in their Day, as did the *Saducees* at *Jerusalem*, and the *Philosophers* at *Athens*: Yea, the Multitude was not so much awed by the Miracles, but that they were easily instigated by the *Pharisaical Jews*, in most Places, and by the Craftsmen at *Ephesus*, and by these who made a Gain of the Devil's Prophetess at *Philippi*, to mob the very Apostles. And the Miracles wrought by the Apostles, with the same Design, would not hinder our Multitude from behaving in the same Manner, in favours of the Religion of their Nation, against that same ve-

Christianity that was taught and instituted by the Apostles, against the Apostles themselves, if now alive, and working Miracles; for, if they will not hear the Scriptures, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the Dead.

But if any should now pretend to any Thing like the Apostolick Miracles, they would, by that very Pretence, declare that the Revelation already made in the Scriptures is not compleat, or not yet sufficiently documented to have come from God; and therefore, would be justly suspected of making themselves liable to the Curse pronounced in the End of the New Testament.

There were Signs and Wonders accompanying Antichrist; and all the Antichristian World boasts, one Way or other, of Signs and Wonders wrought in Confirmation of the Religion of their Nation. But these are no more equal to the Signs and Miracles that attended the giving out of the New Testament Revelation, than these Things done by the Magicians of Egypt came the full Length of the Signs and Wonders that the Lord wrought by Moses. And of this Sort are all the Signs that have no other Use in the Minds of Men, but to seduce them from the Kingdom that's not of this World, and to confirm them in Subjection to Church Authority supported with secular Power.

The New Testament declares, That when the Christian Revelation should be perfect, or compleatly given out, the extraordinary Things that accompanied it while it was in coming forth, should vanish away and cease, for then the Use and End of them ceased: And instead of any other Thing coming in Place of them, to make the Gospel regarded, we are told, There remain *Faith, Hope, and Charity* the greatest of these Three, which exceed all the extraordinary Gifts. Wherever these are produced by the Gospel, and appear in the Profession or outward Practice of them, there is Christianity in its Power; there it shews it self in its proper Glory, and will raise Attention, and be opposed by the Antichristian World, that has the Form of Godliness, denying the Power of it, yea, and be hated by the polite Christians, as well as the Superstitious. Nevertheless, Faith will be very rare on the Earth when Christ comes.

A. And must not they pretend to something extraordinary, who set up illiterate Tradesmen to preach, and submit to

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them

them as their Teachers? Must they not hold them as inspir'd?

X. I do not hear that the *Waldenses*, the Followers of *Peter Valdo*, pretended to any Signs or Wonders; yet *Luther* give this Account of them, "*Valdo* being a Person of some Learning, explain'd the New Testament to them in the vulgar Tongue; he instructed them so well, that they took Fancy --- to preach and teach, altho' they were but Laicks and without Mission. The Clergy of *Lyons* having rebuk'd them, they began to declaim against Ecclesiasticks. And again he says of them, "Being desirous to make up a Society of Persons that should practise the Precepts of the Gospel, according to the Letter, and renew the Apostolic Manner of Life, they embrac'd several superstitious Practices; afterward they assum'd to themselves the Power of preaching, altho' Laicks, and without Mission. The Clergy opposing their preaching, they stood up against the Prelates and shook off the Yoke of Obedience." Nor did the Brethren of *Bohemia* pretend to any Signs or Wonders, but rested in these wrought by the Prophets and Apostles, whom alone they held as inspir'd by the Spirit of GOD, to make the Revelation of his Mind and Will to Men; yet, for a long Time they had none but illiterate Teachers; for, as *Luther* says of them, while they endeavour'd to avoid the Briers and Bogs wherein the Sophisters and Monks were intangled, they wholly abstain'd from all Study of the Arts, being withal pinch'd by Poverty, which they reliev'd by the Labour of their Hands. And while he commends them highly for their wonderful Skill and Readiness in the Scriptures, he at the same Time complains, That not only the *Greek* and *Hebrew* Tongues, but the *Latin* also, were, in a Manner, lost to them. So that it is no new Thing, you see, among the practical Believers of the Gospel, to set up illiterate Tradesmen to preach, and submit to them as their Teachers, without holding them as inspir'd.

So likewise this People deny Inspiration to ordinary Teachers, who have no Commission to make any new Revelation, as the Apostles and Prophets had; but to teach, exhort and guide the Church, in the Observation of all Things whatsoever Christ commanded the Apostles, as they are written in the Scriptures, and were observed by the first Christians, under the Direction of the Apostles, who have recorded

recorded their Practice, and the Things they taught them to observe, in the New Testament, to be followed by Christians to the End of the World : Therefore, this People regard the Reading of the inspired Writings in their Churches more than the Teaching of any Man whatsoever; and all that their Pastors and Teachers have to say, must be examin'd by the Scriptures: For they can only explain the Scriptures to them by the Scriptures, and they guide them as a People, shewing themselves willing to obey the Words of Jesus Christ, who speaks to them in the Scriptures, and not the Words of Men; and because they are the Disciples of Jesus Christ, they should call no Man Master on the Earth.

A. But how can illiterate Men excel in the Knowledge of the Scriptures, if there be not something extraordinary in the Case?

X. Though the Criticks and metaphysical Doctors have turn'd the Gospel into a Sort of Science, to be taught and learn'd as other Sciences are, by Men who propose to make a Gain of it in the World, as it now stands; yet indeed it is not a Science, or human Art, but, as it calls itself, a *Word of Faith*, and that not human, but divine. The Apostles oppos'd the Wisdom of GOD in this Word of Faith which they preach'd, unto the Wisdom of the Scribe and the Disputer of this World; and if you consider their Writings, I reckon you will not think they favour of our Schools. As a Man may excel in Science who has no Taste of the Word of Faith, so may one excel in the Knowledge of the Word of Faith who is a great Stranger to what we call Science. It is not Criticism or Philosophy that brings Men to the Faith, nor can it build them up in it. I was once commending our Friend here as a Critick upon the New Testament; but what Sort of a Christian Teacher, or Guide, do you think would he make?

And you may as well say, how can an illiterate Man excel in Faith, Hope and Charity? For these depend wholly on a true Knowledge of the Scripture; or how can one excel in Prayer? wherein I have seen a Cow-Herd excelling learn'd Divines: For, whatever Difference be thought of 'twixt the Gifts of Prayer and of Preaching, yet both are the Gifts of Jesus Christ, who gives Pastors and Teachers to his Church; and though these may be some Way aped, they

can never be truly attain'd by all human Art or Learning.

Q. I own the same Things may be said against all supernatural Illumination, and Faith itself, and especially against your supernatural Charity, which is declar'd to exceed the Knowledge of all Mysteries. And if no supernatural Endowment, no Gift of GOD in Religion, carrying Men further than the Force of Nature and Art, shall be admitted, there is an End of the Christian Religion.

Thus far I have enquir'd into the Principles and Way of your Sect; if I should enquire more particularly into their Church Order and Worship, I suppose you would refer me to the New Testament, as their only Directory, and perhaps suspect me of intending to join them.

X. And when you condescend to examine their Order and Manner of Worship by the New Testament, you'll find them ready to drop every Thing that you can shew them not to be founded there, and as ready to hearken to you pointing out any Thing in that Book, that's yet overlook'd by them; and for this they are willing to bear the Reproach of Changeableness and Unstability. And indeed, I wish you never do worse than become one of them.

Q. Upon the whole, I must acknowledge, if there be any true Christianity in the World, this must be the Profession of it.

A. But it is a Whim at best, that cannot subsist long, and I cannot vindicate you from being whimsical, in troubling your Head so much about it as you have done.

Q. If they pursue these Principles, and stand to them, they will put me to think.

X. I wish they may, for your Sake.

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